

Perfect Friend



"THESE THREE HEARTS"

Sacred Heart Blessed Claude St. Margaret Mary
 Window in the Chapel of St. Stanislaus Seminary
 Florissant, Missouri

PERFECT FRIEND

THE LIFE OF BLESSED

Claude La Colombière, S. J.

1641-1682



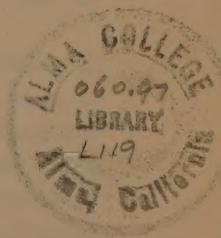
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Introduction

THIS BOOK, in its present English dress, is the result of the interest of three Jesuits in the prophetic role of a fourth, who was chosen by Christ Himself to be one of the first great modern apostles of the devotion to the Sacred Heart. A number of accounts of the life of Claude La Colombière had already appeared, but it was left for Father Georges Guitton, S.J., to bring out the first scholarly biography. Years of patient research went into the making of this book, as Father Guitton laboriously assembled his materials in exactly retracing the path of his subject and in authenticating the text of La Colombière's voluminous writings. As a consequence, this account has replaced all of its predecessors.

Some thirty-two years ago Father Young was a tertian father at the Maison La Colombière in Paray-le-Monial where the body of Blessed Claude is enshrined. The writer of this introduction was also a tertian father at Paray-le-Monial some thirty years later, when both he and Father Young, independently of each other, conceived the idea of making Guitton's classic work available to English readers. What more natural than that the two should collaborate to make better known their seventeenth century brother for the greater glory of the Sacred Heart?

The collaboration, however, was scarcely equal. The work of translation is completely Father Young's. The original arrangements

for translation and publication, a certain amount of on the spot leg-work, some suggestions, and the excisions required to reduce the work of Guitton to marketable size are the work of Father Young's collaborator.

Regarding these excisions, nothing essential has been omitted. The appendices of the original work, most of which are of little interest to a non-French reader, have been sacrificed along with the bulk of the footnotes. Several of the earlier chapters which deal with his French background and education have been slightly condensed. For more precise documentation of data presented in the original French, scholars are referred back to it.

A special word of gratitude is here in place to thank Father Guitton of the Jesuit theologate at Fourvière in Lyons for his great kindness in permitting the translation and allowing the changes indicated. For an historian to allow his painstaking documentation to be coolly dropped is distressing at least, especially when the work is a true labor of love, as was this life of Blessed Claude. We believe, however, that the same high quality of historical integrity which led the French Academy of Letters to crown five of Father Guitton's other works is transparently present in this one in its new English garb, even when it lacks the usual complete scholarly additions.

But to return to the subject of this book.

Paray-le-Monial, with its present-day tertianship, is of course one of the spots precious to the Society of Jesus. In this quiet, little town on the southwestern edge of ancient Burgundy, famed for its wines and its saints, took place three centuries ago the revelations of Christ to a young Visitation nun which flowered into the great modern devotion to the Sacred Heart. A key figure in this story of divine love was St. Margaret Mary's spiritual director, Blessed Claude La Colombière.

"My faithful servant and perfect friend. . . ." Thus he was styled by Christ Himself in an encomium almost unique in the annals of hagiography. Blessed Claude's life, despite its divine stamp of approval, will never perhaps have a strong popular appeal. This may be owing to the apparent prominence of "method" in his life. He is important principally because of where he stands in relation to

the devotion to the Sacred Heart. Method and all, however, Blessed Claude has much to offer twentieth century followers of Christ.

Father Guittou well observes in his original preface the significance of Claude's birth at the time when Descartes' *Discours de la méthode* was all the rage. Fidelity of service and perfection of friendship result only from a strong character's cooperation with grace. The effort for self-mastery in any field requires a rigorous systematic training; so, little wonder if spiritual gymnastics seem prominent, at least in the earlier stages of a saint's career. But grace will always hold the primacy over human effort. None realized this better than our methodical Claude. At the conclusion of his act of oblation, in his *Spiritual Retreat*, he clearly affirms: *Do your will in me, O Lord! I realize that I am continually thwarting it, but I do so unwillingly. Yours it is to accomplish all, divine Heart of Jesus Christ. You alone will possess all the glory of my sanctification, if I make myself holy. This truth is clearer to me than daylight itself. Yet, my sanctification will be great glory for You, and this is the only reason I have for ardently longing for perfection.*

From the intimate writings left us by Blessed Claude we can piece together his daily struggles, his "method" of holiness. Of course, this is not quite fair. These private records of an heroic soul unflinchingly exposing itself to self-scrutiny were never intended for other eyes than those of a spiritual director. Neither were they in any sense supposed to provide a complete portrait. Unfortunately, we tend to take them for such, and the austere picture at times frightens our own laxity and disturbs our own complacency.

Asceticism is not mysticism; but it is as necessary for the mystical life as the skeleton is for the body. All the great mystics have emphasized this. A great ascetic is not necessarily a great saint; it is even disputed whether even a great mystic always is such. But asceticism is the preparation, the purging, the refining, the lifting up of a man's arms hungrily to God. When God reaches down and takes that purified soul into His own arms, He lifts it to the mystical state.

Claude La Colombière was at once an ascetic and a mystic. A

hoary prejudice that will never quite stay dead would have it that there is little room for mysticism in the Jesuit scheme of things; that all Jesuits are laid in the same Procrustean bed of asceticism. It is not difficult to discover how such distorted impressions arise. When one judges the personality of a saint exclusively, or even principally, from a meticulously kept spiritual diary, in which introspection and self-analysis loom out of every page, one easily comes away with an impression firmly imprinted in the back of his memory which bears about the same relation to the living reality as a set of blueprints do to the finished building. Jesuit saints have fared ill in this respect at the hands of enthusiastic biographers who, with monotonous regularity, have trumpeted forth in ringing martial terms almost every achievement in their very active lives. Thus, the *contemplativus in actione* (the man of prayer at work), a formula which expresses the entirely new approach to the apostolate adopted by the early Jesuits, is lost sight of in a whirl of activity, and there emerges in print the type of the warrior saint astride his prancing charger.

"From the practical man, deliver us, O Lord!" Chesterton once begged. We who in our work are called to intimate union with Christ can well paraphrase him to ask deliverance from such interpretations of "whirlwind" saints. For, it is not hard today to find a life teeming with activity. The problem is not so much to find activity as to be united with God in the thick of activity. In other words, since sanctity is basically union with Jesus Christ in charity, our problem is to foster that prayerful union in the midst of the normal activities of life—a busy life lived outside the cloister walls. For this we need models. Father Guittou has provided us with one here by bringing into sharper focus the picture of this particular Jesuit.

When Claude writes this touching note to his sister, a Visitation nun who was ill at the time, he expresses his own gentle anguish at the tug-of-war within him between the contemplative and the man of action: "How happy you must be, dear sister, living in your solitude! . . . How I would envy you your hiddenness, even with your present ills, if I were not thoroughly convinced that there is

no greater good in the world than doing the will of Him Who governs us. . . . But, dear sister, therein lies the difficulty of being eternally among men and yet searching there only for God; of always having three or four times more tasks to care for than one can possibly do, without losing that peace of soul, without which one cannot have God; of having hardly a moment for reflection and for recollection in prayer, and yet never being dissipated. All this is possible, yes, but you will admit that it is not easy."

Here perhaps lies the reason for Claude's being chosen by Christ as the prototype of the modern apostle of the Sacred Heart. Certainly he exemplifies the almost contradictory traits of those who must combine intense activity among souls with close, prayerful union with Him for whom souls are being garnered. The growth of these traits in Blessed Claude, as he struggled to free himself from the worldliness and spiritual mediocrity of his age is a triumph of love and grace. The steady weaving of this pattern from the beginning of his religious life to his premature death at forty-one forms a part of the tapestry of that fabulous period of French secular history whose bright reds and golds shed a dazzling lustre over all Europe.

Claude La Colombière, well-born, brilliant, personable, early hailed as a savant, a literateur, a preacher of extraordinary talent, could have allowed the pattern of his life to continue to be woven about the culture and court of *le Roi Soleil*. But he—and Christ—chose otherwise. Claude turned his back on this world's glitter and walked towards a more hidden brilliance. So well did he succeed in this, that after his death, the puzzled priest in Claude's own community whose duty it was to write its chronicle, could set down no more than that "there was nothing worth noting to be recorded." Nothing worth noting? But one day it came about that in an obscure country town, an unlettered peasant girl whose frail body was burning in a fever of divine love, looked up as she was approaching the grille to receive communion from the hands of the convent's chaplain, and as she later recorded: "Our Lord showed me His Sacred Heart like a fiery furnace and two other hearts on the point of uniting and being drawn within it, and told me that

'it is thus that My pure love unites these hearts together for all eternity.'"

These three hearts are united in eternity: the Sacred Heart, the heart of St. Margaret Mary Alacoque, the heart of Blessed Claude La Colombière. With the hope that this present work may serve to make our Jesuit brother better known and perhaps contribute to his eventual sharing with the humble Visitandine the full honors of canonization, we ask him to invoke God's blessings on the reader.

“

NEIL C. MCCLUSKEY, S.J.

PARAY-LE-MONIAL



Translator's Note

THE almost prohibitive costs of book production have made it advisable to omit certain passages of Father Guitton's *Life of Blessed Claude*. These omissions, however, will not in any way affect a complete presentation of the subject in English, which was so masterfully achieved by Father Guitton in French. Most of the omissions are notes, which are of a scholarly character, and will be easily accessible to scholars in the French life. The translator is deeply indebted to Father McCluskey, not only for the introduction which he has been kind enough to write, but especially for his generous cooperation in pointing out passages that could be omitted without notable loss.

The translator owes a debt of gratitude to Father Lawrence Chiuminatto, S.J., Director of White House, the St. Louis Jesuit House of Retreats, and to Father Eugene P. Murphy, S.J., Director of the Sacred Heart Program, St. Louis. It was largely through their repeated encouragement that this translation was undertaken. When finished, it was through the pledge of generous financial support of Father Chiuminatto and his Laymen's Retreat League of St. Louis that publication was made possible.

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He is glad also to take this opportunity of thanking Miss Patricia Arth, who went to considerable trouble at the Bodleian Library, Oxford, and elsewhere to verify the wording of several official documents connected with the Titus Oates conspiracy.

Grateful acknowledgments are also made to Messrs. Longmans, Green & Company for permission to quote from Osmund Airy's *Charles II*; to Messrs. William Collins Sons and Company for permission to quote from Arthur Bryant's *King Charles II*, and to Sands and Company to quote from Malcolm V. Hay's, *The Jesuits and the Popish Plot*.

THE TRANSLATOR

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☞ PART ONE

Preparations ..

Hidden Childhood, 1641-1650.

"NOTHING is more dangerous," it has been said, "than to ask a man about an event which he might have witnessed, but which as a matter of fact he did not because his attention was not drawn to it. This is what happens, especially when one is looking for information on the childhood of those who have made some stir in the world. When great men were little children they were pretty much like others, and we are the first to be surprised when we learn that a playmate has suddenly become a minister of state. One is then beset by journalists and under pain of appearing ignorant or afflicted with loss of memory, one is induced to find stored away in one's memory recollections that have an air of prophecy."¹

A mishap such as this does not take place with regard to Blessed Claude, whose life we have undertaken to write. No one among his contemporaries or his relatives has made any effort to find in his childhood signs that he was predestined to reveal to the world the riches of the Heart of Jesus. His first years are hidden behind an impenetrable cloud.

The day of his birth, February 2, 1641, recalled the feast on which the Virgin Mary went to the Temple to present Him who was to hide His divine wisdom at Nazareth until His thirtieth year. The coincidence was an omen.

¹ Jean Guittou, *Philosophie du Témoignage*, XVI^{es} Journées universitaires (Paris: 1937).

Saint-Symphorien-d'Ozon, where Claude was born, today a small town of 1800 souls belonging to the diocese of Grenoble, was then subject in spiritual matters to the diocese of Lyons, and in civil affairs to the bailiwick of Vienne in Dauphiny.

Claude's grandparents belonged to a noble family of Bourgogne whose patrimonial surname was Gaude. From a stronghold overlooking the Saône which they possessed near Chalon, they added the name of "La Colombière," and then took for their coat of arms three silver doves on an azure field. When, on the death of the young duke, Philip de Rouvres, the Tard-Venus laid waste Bourgogne and razed to the ground the dwelling of the Gaudes, the family had to go into exile, and towards 1362 became established at Valence. In this land of Dauphiny their family name disappeared and that alone remained which recalled the destroyed dwelling. It was besides variously written, as official documents set it down indifferently as "Colombier," "du Colombier," "la Colombière," or "de la Colombière." In the sixteenth century some of the members of the family appear either among the treasurers or collectors of the province, or of the state-treasury, and in the chapter of the cathedral of Vienne.

Others, descended doubtless from a younger branch, came more modestly to find refuge at Saint-Symphorien, where in 1492 we first find them filling the office of notary. In 1573 when the Parliament of Dauphiny ratified the edict which declared that the office of notary was derogatory to the nobility, the Colombières of Saint-Symphorien lost for a time the title and the privileges of their nobility. It was only after the death of Claude that his elder brother Humbert was to recover them.²

² In 1687, after eleven years spent as councillor in the parliament of Grenoble. If the particle called "nobiliaire" indicated in fact a title of lordship over some domain, the absence of this particle would not necessarily be a sign of plebeian extraction. In a baptismal document of 1561, the great-grandfather of Claude is designated as "noble Benoit Colombière." And on the authentic lists of "nobles" of Saint-Symphorien and of Vienne in the seventeenth century, we see such names as Humbert Pauze, Jean Palerna, Pierre Verdier, Louys Quinson, etc. It is noteworthy, however, that in the catalogues of the Society of Jesus, except for the four years which Claude spent in Paris and for his year of tertianship at Lyons, the *particle nobiliaire* never precedes his name. Likewise, after his death

In this little town on the right bank of the Ozon, Cluny possessed a priory dedicated to St. Martin and dependent on the Lyons Abbey of Ainay. Its buildings were laid in ruins during the wars of religion, and in the seventeenth century only the chapel remained. Although Mass was celebrated there scarcely once in three years, it was in a good enough state of repair. Less fortunate was the parish church which had been sacked by the Huguenots, who melted down its organ. The nine priests who served it were deprived of their incomes, stripped even of their garments, shirts and shoes, and were obliged to send a petition to the Duke of Nemours, Governor of Dauphiny, begging him not to let them die of hunger, February 2, 1562. Thereafter the maintenance of the church could only fall into neglect.

Here as in many other places, the gangs of the Baron des Adrets had everywhere left the marks of their claws. When they passed by here in 1562 an incident took place which does too much honor to Claude's great-grandfather to be allowed to remain in oblivion.

When these image-breaking freebooters took over a locality they demanded "all the reliquaries and clothing in the churches," to make what use they pleased of them. Out of the copes and chasubles they cut costumes for display; they melted the organ pipes to make bullets. What they could not use they smashed. When they left for Vienne to bring support to Baron des Adrets, Pontier, their captain, who had only just then arrived at Saint-Symphorien, ordered all the ornaments and sacred objects to be delivered up. "Otherwise," he cried, "I will have the town laid waste." The leading citizens brought the ruffians some "suits, a silver cross and a ciborium." "Keep these for me under pain of death until I return," commanded Pontier, and then continued on his way. But at midnight a group of men, black as devils, awakened the inhabitants and in the name of the captain ordered them to hand over the treasure. Benedict La Colombière, at the time vice-chatelain of Saint-Symphorien, together with two other prominent men, wished to

the first editors of his books always call him "Claude La Colombière." So do the *Mémoires de Trévoux*, when in 1726 they review the first edition of his *Lettres spirituelles*, which had just appeared at Lyons, published by the Frères Bruyset.

accompany the group to Vienne. Pontier first took the lion's share for himself, but at the earnest request of the town's representatives agreed to return them some of the vestments. "On condition," he said, "that you pay three crowns of Tourrain currency for the benefit of the band, and seven livres to cover expenses." As to the cross, the villain, having snatched it from the hands of La Colombière, struck the stone of the window so violently with it, that "the image of the crucified," and a number of fragments fell upon the stone steps in front of the house. Benedict piously stooped down and without fear of the low jokes directed at him, gathered the broken pieces. "Take them away," sneered Pontier, "you won't be able to use them any more in your mummeries!"

Benedict pressed the precious fragments to his breast. Without realizing it, he was anticipating the reparation which his great-grandson was to ask in the name of Christ for the profanations and blasphemies committed against the love of God.

For a long time the family lived in a house of modest appearance to the north of Saint-Symphorien and not far from the Lyons gate and the chapel of our Lady of Pity. They were still living there when Bertrand La Colombière, grandson of Benedict, married.

Marguerite Coindat, daughter of a rich citizen of Vienne, lost both parents at an early age, and was brought up by her uncle, Humbert Pauze, who owned an estate in the neighborhood of Saint-Symphorien. She was frequently seen in the country, especially in vacation time. Engaging, generous, she was much in demand as god-mother, and in her younger years, her signature as such is frequently found in baptismal registers. Bertrand had plenty of time throughout a number of summers to grow in appreciation of her. The marriage took place towards the end of 1633.

Four years later, Bertrand inherited from his cousin, Peyroct de l'Isle de Vauchappon, a dwelling situated slightly to the south of the one mentioned, at an equal distance from the city walls and the river Ozon. It was a stronghold which until 1630 had already served for considerable time as a residence for the captain-chatelain of Saint-Symphorien, Jacques du Mas de Charconne. It was frequently repaired since then and even partially rebuilt in the eighteenth and

nineteenth centuries by the family Lombard de Buffières. It was always known in the neighborhood as the "Chateau." Today certain services connected with the municipality find housing there.

Adjoining this "Chateau" on the north there still exists a low building, ramshackle and dusty, the only interesting point of which is that it has not been altered for four hundred years. Its east wall, which faces on the highway, is still pierced with mullioned windows. The façade of the west wall, looking towards the garden, is adorned with an old stone stairway, the roof of which is supported by two stylish colonnettes. It is this dwelling which doubtless because of its air of antiquity was called by the inhabitants "Maison de la Colombière," and for a long time passed as the birthplace of Blessed Claude.

It is true that these two dwellings belonged to the family since 1637. But a careful examination of the archives tends to prove that the title of birthplace, with the exceptions of the restorations pointed out below, should be given to the first, the stronghold which was bequeathed by Peyroct de l'Isle de Vauchappon. It was moreover much the more important.

When Bertrand and his young wife took up their residence there in 1639, their eldest son Humbert was already four. A daughter Yzabeau, who was born the following year, lived scarcely eight months. On Saturday, February 2, 1641, on the feast of the Purification of the Blessed Virgin, their third child was born.

The name Claude was given him by his godfather, Claude II de Maugiron, Count of Montleans. Governor of Vienne, a cavalry officer besides, who had served with glory in the king's army since 1630, he did great honor to the La Colombières in acknowledging this godson. As he was off to the wars in Italy at the time, it was necessary to postpone the baptism. Thus, Claude must have been baptized privately without delay, just as his sister Yzabeau had been, by M. Bascon, curé of Saint-Symphorien. A playful dog, romping with the nephew of the curé, tore the parish register, thus preventing us from ever knowing exactly the day on which the solemn ceremonies were officially supplied. But it could not have been before April 8, 1641.

These ceremonies, however, were quite modest, for so dilapidated was the parish church, that even the baptism of a prince could not

have been carried out with any magnificence. The chapels of the choir and of the aisles, many of which moreover were endowed, were roofless and unfit for any service. In the principal nave, the ceiling had begun to rot and the vault threatened to fall. Each year the consultors, inspired or supported by Bertrand La Colombière, tried to make the assembled parish ashamed of this sad condition. "It is altogether shameful," said one of them in 1649, "that the house of God Almighty should be left in such a condition that when it rains there is no place in it where one can keep dry."

The souls of Christian men were not less neglected. M. Bascon had grown old, and it seems that his teaching of Christian doctrine had never been fervent. "Hitherto," declares a parish meeting of this period, "the reverend pastors explained the holy commandments of God and of the Church on Sundays and solemn feasts so that we would know our obligations as Christians." None of this has been done now for "long years, to the great harm of all the people." The community therefore begs the chatelain to use his influence with the pastor so that either he or a substitute give the instruction as heretofore, and continues with the threat that if he does not give them satisfaction, "the consultor and some of the leading parishioners will go to the Archbishop of Lyons to present the grievances of the parish."

The major seminaries, for which the Council of Trent had asked a hundred years earlier, had hardly begun to be established, and following the wars of religion, the rural clergy who too frequently had to be pressed into service, were often without sufficient preparation, and stood in great need of Vincents de Paul and M. Oliers to blow their zeal into a flame.

It is not here then that the little Claude was helped with his first religious instructions. Fortunately, his mother was a woman whose intelligence and faith were equal to every need. Venerated by all when she died prematurely in 1661, "she was buried in the church," which the pastor was quite ready to allow, "having departed this life a very good Catholic and having very devoutly received the sacraments of the Church."

An unmistakable proof of the quality of this Christian mother is

the fact that of the five children she was able to rear—Yzabeau and René having died in infancy—four consecrated themselves to God either in religion or the priesthood. Floris, who was born in 1645, became a priest in the diocese of Vienne and was elected by the chapter as curé-archdeacon of the Cathedral of St. Maurice. He filled this office continuously throughout all his life. Marguerite-Elizabeth, born in 1648, a timid little soul at first, but always an admirer of her brother Claude, entered the Visitation at Condrieu, where she led an edifying life until the age of eighty-six. Joseph, born in 1651, was a lawyer before becoming a disciple of M. Olier and a missionary in Canada of extraordinary austerity of life. He later became vicar-general to the second Bishop of Quebec, Mgr. de la Croix de Saint-Vallier. We shall come upon him once or twice in the course of this history.

Humbert, the eldest, became the father of thirteen children, and according to the testimony of the comptroller of Dauphiny, one of the most distinguished members of the Parliament. The quality of his Christian education was manifested by a robust faith and a virtue that never failed. It was said of him that he was a monk living in the world.

Was it the desire to provide more easily for the education of these children that urged Bertrand La Colombière to leave Saint-Symphorien? The fact remains that at the beginning of the year 1650, one of three choice offices connected with the public finances became vacant at Vienne, and Bertrand bought it and came to take up his residence in that ancient city.

Schoolboy at Lyons, 1650-1658

ALTHOUGH Vienne was a town of hardly eight thousand inhabitants, the opportunities it offered for the instruction and training of youth were quite different from those offered at Saint-Symphorien. The memorials and the remains of Roman civilization created an intellectual atmosphere that was favorable to Latin culture; Julius Caesar, various consuls, and a number of emperors had made it their residence.

From the point of view of religion, thanks to the watchfulness of the archbishops of the family of de Villars—a true dynasty, which beginning in 1575 was to last a hundred and twenty years—the diocese of Vienne had almost entirely escaped the scourge of Calvinism. This is all the more remarkable because the proximity of Valence where the Bishop, John de Montluc, had let the wolves into his fold, would have made it easy for the perversion to spread. The vast Cathedral of Saint-Maurice was once again in all its splendor; the hundred ecclesiastics whom it maintained, twenty of whom were canons, permitted it to give the liturgy a magnificence which Claude would never have suspected in the town of his birth. Commanding a view of the Rhone, the Jesuit college, built in the ancient garden of the emperors, offered the young boy a complete course of instruction including even theology.

Before taking up his residence in the parish of Notre Dame de la Vie Vielle—the name coming doubtless from the ancient temple of Livia which served as a church—Bertrand La Colombière had for a long time been a parishioner of St. André-le-Bas. This had formerly been the church of a Benedictine Abbey. For about a hundred years now the monks had placed it at the disposal of the faithful to supply for the parish church of Saint Pierre-entre-Juifs which had been burned by the Huguenots. Within the walls of Saint-André, during

the Council of Vienne in 1311, Clement V, the first pope to do so, had solemnly celebrated the feast of Corpus Christi. Accompanied by numerous princes, patriarchs, and prelates from every land, he had carried the Most Blessed Sacrament in procession before an enthusiastic throng. Are we to believe that the fifteen or twenty monks kept these memories under a bushel? When the young Claude went to them for his religious instruction—especially if he made his first communion in this abbey church—he must have heard them recounted. They could be the first seeds of his fervent love of the Blessed Sacrament.

This instruction did not last more than six months. About the middle of October, Claude, then nine and a half years of age, began his grammar lessons with the Jesuits of Lyons, not at the college of the Trinity, situated on the banks of the Rhone, but at the junior college of Notre Dame de Bon Secours, at the foot of the hill of Fourvière.

But why remove a child so young from the midst of his family, when Vienne enjoyed the same group of teachers he was sent to find at Lyons? Considering the character of their second son, the parents were already thinking perhaps of a clerical vocation for him; and since Claude belonged by birth to the diocese of Lyons, why not have him get his education in the company of those who one day would become his confreres? Besides, as the Duke de Villeroy, Marquis of Saint-Symphorien, was governor of Lyons, Bertrand was right in thinking that such a support would not be a matter of indifference in a few years in obtaining an important benefice for Claude.

Considerations bearing on his relatives could likewise influence his decision. The College of Notre Dame de Bon Secours was established in a building belonging to M. Loubat-Carles, treasurer-general. Now, M. Carles was a friend, perhaps related by marriage to the family of Coindat, and had earlier been godfather to Claude's mother. It is very probable that the boy, a day scholar as were all the students of that time, had lodgings with him.

In founding this junior college, Madame de Gadagne did not wish merely to provide for the convenience of the families living on the

right bank of the Saône, but still more for the safety of the children. Over the river, besides the two wooden bridges of Bellecour and St. Vincent, which were footbridges rather, the town had at the time only a stone bridge, the Pont du Change, frequently called "Saône Bridge." Even though it was by far the most important, the traffic and the turmoil, especially on market days, created a very special danger for the young.

One evening of January, 1653, the traffic on this bridge was especially heavy. The crowd was moving from the St. Paul side towards the Tennis Hall, where a group of strolling players had announced the presentation of a play called *L'Etourdi*. The leader of the company was a man named Molière.

Claude did three classes of grammar at Bon Secours. He early distinguished himself by his curious and observant mind. Twenty-five years later, when preaching in London, he evoked the impressions made on him by the words of Cardinal Alphonse de Richelieu, Archbishop of Lyons, uttered on his deathbed in March, 1653. After twenty years as a Carthusian, he had been proposed by his brother Armand, the great minister of state, for the primatial dignity of France. And now, despite a fruitful and glorious episcopate, he could not in his last moments prevent himself from sighing, "Oh how much better it would have been to die a Carthusian than a Cardinal!"¹

In October of 1653, Claude having added to his growth, could safely risk the crossing of the Saône to follow the classes of the College of the Trinity. He was to spend five years there, two of which were devoted to philosophy.

It was at this time that the canonical process for the beatification of Francis de Sales stirred the piety of the people of Lyons. Three hundred years had passed since a Frenchman received the honors of the altar. Although the Bishop of Geneva had belonged to the Duchy of Savoy, because of his relations with Paris and his sojourns there, and thanks to his foundations of monasteries in France, and most of all because of the language he made use of, he was considered one of the glories of France. Moreover, Lyons possessed at the Visitation

¹ *Oeuvres du P. La Colombière*, III, 467.

of Bellecour the room in the gardner's house in which the saint had died like a poor man. In July, 1653, the representative of the Apostolic See, Msgr. de Passelarge, Bishop of Belley, carrying out the official identification of the heart of the illustrious deceased, found it in the same state of preservation as it had been in 1631. Among the fervent visitors who were attracted to these rooms by the renown of Francis de Sales, how can we fail to count the young Claude? His father, who was the administrator of some acres of land belonging to the Visitandines in the neighborhood of Saint-Symphorien, came occasionally to Bellecour on business. He would also bring his son along. It was here that the boy first imbibed his devotion to a saint to whom later he was to acquire so close a resemblance.

We may well imagine that in the course of these visits he would very gladly be interested in the works undertaken by the government in this very year of 1653 to straighten out and beautify the Place Bellecour and make it worthy of becoming the Place Louis-le-Grand.

On the fortieth day following the death of Alphonse de Richelieu, the Abbot of Ainay, Camille de Neuville, was named as his successor. In these years when everything was matched with epigrams or ballads, everybody was humming about the new prelate:

C'est pour lui d'autant bonne affaire
Que l'on sait que Monsieur son frere,
Le sage et prudent Villeroy
Est gouverneur de par le Roy.

Among the three thousand persons to whom on December 28th of the following year the Archbishop administered confirmation in the church of the Jacobins, we can surely count Claude La Colombière. So large a number, in fact, allows us to suppose that it had been many years since this sacrament had been conferred in this city.

At the College of the Trinity the young man met two religious who were later to play an important part in his life. Father Jean Papon, prefect of studies and director of the sodality, became his master of novices. Father François de la Chaize, professor of poetry,

became his rector for three years, and then, before becoming confessor to Louis XIV, his provincial.

Furthermore, the "senior college," so called to distinguish it from Bon Secours, possessed during these years a whole galaxy of eminent teachers. Of the two rectors following each other in the time of Claude, one, Father Joseph Gibalin, was known for his learned treatises of moral theology and canon law; the other, Father L'Abbé, for his *Eloges sacrés et profanes*, and his *Dissertations historiques*. Although the well known Father Honoré Fabri had left Lyons some years previously to become at Rome theologian to the Sacred Penitentiary, his memory was always fresh at the Trinity. He was the author of a course in physics in six volumes and of numerous scientific treatises, which out of modesty he hardly ever signed. He was a shrewd observer who, they say, had taught the circulation of the blood even before Harvey. He was besides a profound theologian and a canonist of penetrating mind. Because he did not disparage everything in the *Discours de la Méthode*, Father Fabri was accused of Cartesianism by some grim peripatetics. And yet he said: "The philosophy of M. Descartes includes many opinions which I look upon as quite mistaken." Father Claude-François Millet de Chales, the learned mathematician who was Claude's teacher in 1657, had the greatest respect for the treatises published by Fabri, especially on optics, dioptrics, and the magnetic power of the loadstone.

Father Theophile Raynaud, who was the most illustrious theologian in the College of the Trinity and whose published works number no less than twenty folio volumes, attained his sixty-sixth year when Claude began his humanities. Father François Pomey, on the other hand, and Father Claude-François Menestrier had hardly begun their careers. All of these religious and many others, among whom we must not forget Father Pierre Viollet, who was young Claude's teacher of poetry for two years, enjoyed a reputation which spread well beyond the walls of Lyons. Their teaching and their writings made the college one of the glories of the city. Never a person of note who passed through the region but wished to pay it a visit. Princes and kings—even queens—thought it a privilege to be received there. They did not disdain to breathe in, throughout the

course of these festive entertainments, that flattery which art and literature took such delight in displaying in the presence of the great in exhalations that were sometimes more than a little heady.

On July 1, 1653, the second day after his consecration, Camille de Neuville was received at the college with a complimentary address which was followed by a literary skit drawn from the coat of arms of the Villeroys. The spectators beheld the blue of the shield borne from heaven by five sprites who moved in rhythm. The approach of the end of the school year prevented them from doing more. But a few months later, the Archbishop, in *tetrarchia Lugdunensi Prorex potentissimus*, was gratified with a sumptuous literary entertainment on the "Election and Consecration of St. Ambrose" (a historical drama, rather than a piece of fiction, so the author affirmed). But the subject provided a setting for any number of flattering allusions.

In 1656 and 1658, Christina, the wandering Queen of Sweden, who after her conversion to Catholicism had to abdicate her throne in favor of Charles Augustus, passed through Lyons a number of times. On one of these journeys, she took a fancy to see whether all that people said about the stupendous memory of a young Jesuit named Claude Menestrier was true. The Rector must have felt some hesitation to authorize such an examination, which did not fall within the provisions of the *Ratio Studiorum*. But the "Archbishop and Count of Lyons," by a formal command, the municipality by an ordinance posted throughout the streets of the city, had "in the name of the King," recommended that this sovereign be received "with all possible honor." When the meeting assembled, three hundred of the "oddest and most extraordinary" words were chosen, which the young champion after having written down, set himself to repeat with eyes closed, first in the order in which they had been dictated, then in reverse order, and finally, "in any regular arrangements called for."

On December 12, 1658, it was in honor of Louis XIV in person, then in all the brilliance of his youth, that the same Claude Menestrier laid tribute on all the wealth of Latin poetry and erudition. In the presence of the Court of Savoy, with which certain important

negotiations were then being carried on at Lyons, a "ballet" was presented. It was called, "The Ancient Altar of Augustus at Lyons, consecrated to Louis Auguste," which could not have failed to further the success of the diplomatic discussions. It is not certain that the young king manifested the same interest in the literary exploit which the college offered in the form of entertainment—speeches delivered in twelve different languages.

We are surprised not to find the name of Claude La Colombière among the names of the actors in these performances. His character was reserved, a bit bashful, and the growing boy did not possess, perhaps, all the assurance necessary for success in entertainments of this nature. Already his character was turning away from the tinsel and false glitter of the world.

Vacation brought Claude to Vienne and to Saint-Symphorien. Of these visits with his family, from whom on his own avowal he found it so hard to break away, only a single incident has come down to us, so insignificant that in the instance of a normal adolescent one would not think of calling attention to it.

Humbert, his elder by six years, was already a doctor of laws. Before going to Grenoble for a term of probation, he took Claude along as a companion on the journey. Once he had collected from the lawyers the files concerning the business with which he was entrusted, he made them into a parcel "for his very esteemed father," a parcel which he wished to send to him by the safest possible way. "I am going at once to fetch this parcel," he wrote, "so that Claude can bring it to you and you will receive your letter before long." Where he himself was lodging with M. Grimaud, he could find only a room that was very uncomfortable, extremely narrow and noisy. So, he decided at first "to send Claude to pass the night at Rives and then on to Vienne." But he thought better of it. "After writing this," he adds in a postscript, "I have thought that Claude would not be able to spend the night at Rives, to say nothing of his fear of getting lost." A humble detail, but one which gives us some insight into Claude's character—somewhat timid, but always ready to help, the gentle charm of the boy scout rather than the hardihood of the seasoned traveler.

Looking down from the heights of Saint-Symphorien to the southwest, there rises a chapel dedicated to *Notre Dame des Mariniers*, patroness of the Rhone boatmen. Now that the sodalities of the college had taught him the value of devotion to the Blessed Virgin, Claude did not fail to come there to pray with his younger sister or his brothers. With greater certainty still, in the frequent trips he made between Vienne and Saint-Symphorien, he multiplied his pilgrimages to the ancient sanctuary of *Notre Dame de Limon*, where a relic of the true cross was venerated under the eyes of Our Lady of Sorrows. It was a pious stop which enabled him to cultivate the friendship of the Trinitarians who were in charge of the priory, some of whom were related to his family by marriage.

It was the autumn of 1658, and Claude was seventeen. The time was drawing near for him to break away from the joys of his family life, as God had indicated to him. From afar he heard the voices of children "who cried for bread with no one to break it for them." "The harvest was growing white, it was abundant, but the workers were few." Claude trembled with love, but also with fear. These prospects were beguiling, but they also lead to sacrifice. As he said to a mother, later, who refused to allow her child to enter religion, one never has a great "inclination for the cross."

Very sensitive to the charm of acquaintances and friends, gifted with a love of poetry and the arts, "with an extreme love of music, and very fond of singing," he had a sufficient appreciation of the world and the joy of fancies freely satisfied, to experience how much it could cost him to tear himself away from them. He admitted very simply, "I had a horrible aversion for the life to which I bound myself when I became a religious."

But Claude was not the man to allow himself to be guided by his feelings. Already his interior struggles in adolescence had let him see in a glimpse that true happiness consists in giving oneself to God through love.

"Jesus Christ has promised the hundredfold," he wrote later, "and I cannot say that I have ever done anything without receiving, not a hundred times, but a thousand times more than I have ever given up. . . . O Israel, if thou knewest how good thy God is, how gen-

erous! He is so towards His enemies. But with regard to those who serve Him, there is a lavishness of caresses, of sweetnesses, which one cannot tell, which one cannot be silent about, and which one can hardly bear.”²

At the moment, he did not feel these sweetnesses. It was in all the austerity of sacrifice that he bade farewell to his family. Claude was not to see Saint-Symphorien again for twenty years, and then it was to suffer there.

Towards the middle of October he went aboard one of the river boats bound for Avignon, and on the 25th, in company with Jean Lagaste from Condrieu, with whom he had doubtless made the journey, he knocked at the door of the Jesuit novitiate.



3

Young Religious *in Avignon, 1658-1666*

AT the time Claude La Colombière entered the novitiate, the Jesuits had been established at Avignon for more than a hundred years. In the year 1555, while St. Ignatius was still alive, Fathers Ponce Cogordan and Jules Onfroy paid a short visit there. They had come from Rome with Cardinal Alexander Farnese, the papal legate. Ten years later, the town councillors placed the old establishment of Cardinal de la Motte, then belonging to the Brancas, at the disposal of Father Antoine Possevin for the foundation of a college close to St. Didier. Two centuries earlier this mansion had been sanctified by the presence of St. Catherine of Siena. When this fearless woman came to Avignon to urge the Pope to return to Rome, she took lodging there, and prayed for long hours in a little chapel belonging to the palace.

² *Oeuvres*, II, 99.

Despite the disturbances caused by the Calvinists, which did not stop short of rioting, the college had a rapid growth. At the end of twenty years it numbered seven hundred students, more than sixteen hundred at the beginning of the seventeenth century. Without the courtesy of the religious of St. Didier, who generously offered their church, such a crowd could not have been gathered into one place for services on Sundays and feast days. Fortunately, among the novices who were at Avignon towards 1590, there was a young architect of great talent, Etienne Martellange. Very quick to grasp a situation, he set up several projects for the eventual enlargement of the college, and later took advantage of frequent visits to the city to lay out the first plans of the church. It was built by a local architect, La Valfeni re, but was not finished until 1655, three years before Claude's arrival.

It was not, however, to the college that Claude first came to live, for it was early recognized that the Palace de la Motte, because of the clatter made by the students, was unsuited for the recollection of a novitiate. Thanks to the generosity of the noble Madame d'Ancezune, widow of the Marquis de Saint-Chaumont, the Jesuits in 1590, acquired two adjoining pieces of property in the southern section of the city, where they built a novitiate, the first in France.

The buildings taken together presented an imposing appearance, quite suitable for solitude. In front of the main building was a large court, bordered with young elms and surrounded by a cloister which protected it from the street. In the rear of the building gardens stretched as far as the city walls.

The chapel which was finished in 1611 has undergone no changes since. Like that of San Andrea on the Quirinal in Rome—the oldest novitiate of the Jesuits in Rome—it is in the shape of a Greek cross, surmounted by a dome. In the center a beautiful altar of white marble was dedicated to St. Louis.¹

Claude spent two years in this house under the direction of the Father-Master, Jean Papon. He had already known him, having had him as prefect of studies in the College of the Trinity.

His thirty-two fellow novices all came from the east and the south-

¹ The hospital which occupies the site today, not far from the station, kept the name *Hospice Saint-Louis*.

east of France, between Besançon and Marseilles. Some ten of them were from Bourgogne and Franche-Comté, nine from Provence, two from Savoy, the others from the central region, Lyons and Dauphiny, a proportion which was practically maintained among the Jesuits then constituting the Province of Lyons.

Shut off as the novitiate was from the noises of the world, it did not fail to take note of the triumphal passage of Louis XIV through the south of France in the beginning of 1660. The king stopped for almost two weeks in Avignon on his way to the Pyrenees for his marriage with Maria-Theresa. Holy Week offered him the occasion of being present at the services in different monasteries. On Holy Thursday he washed the feet of thirteen poor men in the metropolitan church. He was with the Franciscans on Easter Sunday, and after his communion laid his hand on eight hundred who were sick with the king's evil. The next day he came to hear mass at the novitiate of Saint-Louis, and as a remembrance of his visit, wishing to do honor to a church dedicated to a king of France, his ancestor, he left a crown of pure gold to serve as a diadem about the tabernacle. Claude could not have been unaware of such acts of piety.

Were there others besides? Did Father Jean Papon present his young community to Louis XIV? Some have thought so, even adding that the Duke de Villeroy, who took part as did Mazarin and Colbert, spoke with Claude for a few minutes. Considering the relations he had with the La Colombière family as Marquis of Saint-Symphorien, there is some possibility that he did, not that it really makes any difference.

Much more than such details, we should like to have some spiritual notes which would give us some inkling of the inner feelings of the young man at the beginning of his religious life. But there is nothing of the kind extant. To make up for it, however, we have something better than conjectures. When we recall the fears that assailed him before entering the novitiate, would it be rash to place upon his lips at this period the commentary which he later made on a word of the psalms?

"Lord, I have conceived your law as something hard, as a yoke that is intolerable to our weakness. I thought that to bind myself to

an exact observance of all your commands, would be like putting my hands and feet into irons and condemning myself to everlasting torture. However, I find that just the opposite is true. I find that your commandments are too light. *Latum mandatum tuum nimis.*"²

Is it not the experience of these first days that he reveals when he says:

"Our God who wishes that we give ourselves to Him out of a love that is pure and sincere, conceals from the knowledge of men of the world what He does in favor of His well-beloved. He has sown thorns in the ways of piety, He wishes that we begin by a road that is rough and narrow. It is certain, however, that only the first steps are difficult, that the path soon broadens, and that we move along with less hardship and with greater liberty than in the broad way that leads to perdition."³

An interior life of mingled pains and joys, alternating periods of stark faith and of love dazzling with light, such will be to the very end the experience of his religious life.

Father Jean Papon was a witness of these touches of grace and founded great expectations in him. Giving an account of the novitiate in 1660 to the Father General, Goswin Nickel, the Father-Master said of Claude: "He has remarkable talents, rare judgment, perfect prudence. His experience is also great. He has made a good beginning at his studies, and I think is fit for any kind of ministry." Finally, after having noted that his health was delicate, Father Papon was satisfied with one word, *suavis*, "amiable," to describe the character both interior and exterior, of his novice.⁴

Shortly before the feast of St. Luke in 1660, when classes were usually resumed, Claude went to the College to do his third year of philosophy. This was a requirement recently laid down by Father Nickel before a scholastic could be sent out to teach.⁵ It was there

² *Second sermon for the feast of the Ascension*, I, 425.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ingenium optimum; judicium rarum; prudentia excellens; experientia rerum satis magna; profectus in studiis bene coepit; naturalis complexio suavis; viribus delicatis; ad omnia factus. Triennial catalogue of 1660.* In spite of the name "triennial" this catalogue was not sent regularly to Rome every third year.

⁵ Letter to Father Rémond Baile, visitor of the province of Lyons, December

on October 20th that he pronounced his first vows, a prelude to those interior engagements which we shall see him undertake later and which grew in number like so many bonds making fast his love. Claude was to spend six years in the college as student of philosophy and as teacher.

From the times of Father Possevin, the center of education entrusted to the Jesuits in the Palace de la Motte had considerably extended its walls. Lack of resources in the early days had prevented them from following out the plans of Martellange. But under the stress of necessity, the Fathers had taken advantage of already existing houses in the neighborhood. By ingenious devices they had connected these, raising levels and adapting them with varying success to the needs of classes. Later, after 1632, the end of the wars of religion permitting the people of Avignon to be more generous, rectors tried by porticoes and imitation galleries to bring some harmony into the maze.

In the days of La Colombière all this had developed into two distinct groups of buildings, separated from each other by a street. To the east, and going part way around the chapel, the only piece of architecture in the group, were two different structures which afforded lodging for the religious. To the west and south, radiating out from the old Palace de la Motte, a more important grouping comprised the courts and quarters of the students. The covered bridge which was thrown over the street, joining the two sections and which is still in use today, was not built until 1674.

This somewhat sprawling array of buildings did not prevent Avignon from feeling proud of its college. One of its chroniclers declares: "With its revenues, the extent and beauty of its buildings, it is one of the best colleges possessed by the Jesuits in France."

Twelve young Jesuits together with extern students must have followed the course in philosophy in 1660. Five took logic and seven metaphysics. Claude was one of these last. His application was crowned with success, for his Superiors formed this judgment of him: *Egregius in philosophia*, "Exceptional in philosophy."

22, 1659. Claude having already studied two years of philosophy at Lyons, he had only another year to do.

Two deaths which for different reasons must have been very touching to the religious marked the end of this school year. The first was that of Father Paul de Barry, July 28th in the college of Avignon. Father de Barry had a long career as writer and preacher. When he received viaticum and extreme unction he was frequently heard to sigh: "O grace of graces, to die in the Society of Jesus!" Perhaps it was by his preaching, and certainly by his writings, that Father de Barry left his mark on La Colombière. He was so fervent in making known the Heart of Mary that St. John Eudes counted him among the twelve apostles of this devotion, and thus predisposed Claude's soul to understand the heart of Jesus. Moreover, when Father de Barry evangelized Paray-le-Monial in 1626, he awakened the desire of the religious life in a number of persons, and in order to satisfy it summoned the Daughters of the Visitation to that city. Thus, without being aware of it, he prepared the monastery in which Jesus Christ would one day come to reveal the treasures of His Sacred Heart to St. Margaret Mary and to the Blessed Claude La Colombière.

Shortly after Paul de Barry's death Claude's mother passed away at Saint-Symphorien. "On the third day of August," runs a note from Bertrand La Colombière, "my good wife died in our house at Saint-Symphorien, and was buried in the church behind the altar of St. Crepin. God wished to receive her into His paradise where, with the help of His grace, I believe she has gone after many sufferings." Contemporaries speak in no different terms of Madame La Colombière. Neither Claude's own letters, nor the biographical notices of his brothers or of his sister, afford us any details about their mother, an omission which we much deplore. The soul of a mother is so often a help to understand the soul of a saint! Was not a John Bosco "prefigured" by the pious and firm affection of "mama Margarita?" Here, reversely, it is from the delicate and strong soul of the son that we are able to get some inkling of the strength of character in the soul of Marguerite Coindat.

Was Claude present at the last moments of his mother? An old biographer, Father Seguin, says that he was, gives an account of their last meeting, and places these words on the lips of Madame La

Colombière: "My son, you will be a holy religious." The author does not indicate the source of his assertion, and the silence observed by Bertrand in the note we have just now cited, gives no support to this conjecture.

"Exceptional in philosophy," his teachers had declared of Claude. At the beginning of the school year 1661, he was named regent of the lowest grammar class, the sixth form. This modest post was for a beginner quite according to the spirit of the *ratio studiorum*. The hidden life continued. It was necessary for the slow training of him whom Jesus wished to make His "faithful servant and perfect friend." Each year, for five years, the teacher went up with his students from one class to the other, and led them as far as humanities.

From this time on the young religious showed a remarkable facility for study. But he did not allow himself to be so absorbed by his teaching duties as to find no time for other tasks. The keen observation and the wide knowledge which his preaching soon revealed bore witness at one and the same time to a penetrating view of the society of his day and to a fairly wide reading. And these talents were sometimes employed beyond the limits of his classes.

In 1665 the school year was opened by a discourse delivered at a solemn session which marked the beginning of the term at St. Luke's. Today such an event appears commonplace to us, but in a college of the seventeenth century it was a mark of the more solemn events of the scholastic year.

At the time there was a rather delicate political situation in Avignon. Three years earlier the Corsican Guard at Rome, provoked by the bombastic utterances of some Frenchmen, had very gravely insulted the French ambassador, the Duke de Crequi. For more than eighteen months Louis XIV occupied the Comtat-Venaissin, and through diplomatic channels and by force of arms multiplied his efforts to obtain the most complete and humiliating apologies from Alexander VII. During this period of ferment, the city dominated by the Palace of the Popes must have often rung with the cry, very welcome but very seditious, of "Long live the King!" One might equally have had a mind to cry, "Long live the Popel" But one had to remain silent.

For many this conflict between loyalties must have been heartbreaking.

When finally an understanding was reached between Rome and Versailles, and the Comtat was returned to the Sovereign Pontiff, an ill-timed rigor of Colonna, the new Italian governor, aroused the anger of the people of Avignon. The soldiers of Louis XIV reappeared at the gates of the city, but this time to support the authority of Alexander VII. Southern impetuosity was readily appeased in the presence of the lances and muskets of the soldiery.

In such circumstances one can guess what prudence was demanded of the Jesuits. At the end of this October, 1665, with public opinion ruffled by gusts of passion which still persisted, what was to be the subject of the young orator's discourse? In certain quarters ill-will was on the watch, and the least misstep might turn out to be fatal. And yet even then, La Colombière would not have been able to make up his mind to speak and say nothing.

In these formal meetings, in which the mind delighted to escape from the present to seek satisfaction in the past, or in the realm of pure ideas, the candidate himself would choose as the subject of his eulogy, a panegyric on some historical personage, or better still an abstract person, a eulogy of the soldier, the magistrate, the poet, the orator, the historian, which would allow of flattering allusions to men of flesh and blood present in the audience. But to avoid misunderstanding, where so many military and civil leaders, so many writers, had incurred the resentment of the public, how could one take a chance with such a panegyric?

Claude therefore decided to deliver a eulogy on the panegyrist himself:

"Just as in the Olympic games, the herald, after having adjudged the victors their crowns and encomiums, received, in turn from another herald, the encomium and the palms he had won, so I have thought that I ought to rise—unequal myself alas to my task—a panegyrist of the panegyrist, who does not wish after having distributed praise, to be obliged to retire without first having received his share of the laurels."

It was not however a mere literary pastime. La Colombière took advantage of his subject to put his audience on guard against detraction and the wickedness of the tongue, a very useful lesson at all times, but all the more necessary in times of dissension, when the axiom, "*Homo homini lupus*," is only too inevitably realized:

"I do not know whether there is a more shameful natural tendency than slander. It attacks even the most genuine virtues, and finds everywhere, or thinks it does, a place to set the mark of its poisonous tooth. No vice has spread more infection among humankind than the fancy that our renown is increased by whatever we can wrest from our neighbor, and the belief that we rise in the esteem of the world, not only by our own merit, but by the defects of others."

The panegyrist does just the opposite: "To whom has he ever given praise without at the same time giving eternity? . . . What would Achilles be without his Homer?"

As we know how sensitive Claude was to praise, how much he even reproached himself later for his inclination to vainglory, his "predominant passion," are we not right in thinking that in the following lines he gives us a glimpse into his own soul?

"The hope of praise always inflames our courage. . . . If Demosthenes himself served his country at the cost of so many cares and labors, if he faced so many enmities and dangers, how can we doubt that he was urged on by the desire of glory, he who having heard by accident a few words in praise of himself uttered in a conversation by some humble women, avowed that his immense service to the state seemed to him to be thereby abundantly repaid? What would he have said, and what would he not have accomplished, to obtain a word of praise from Aeschines, his rival in eloquence, or a Hyperides, or an Isocrates?"⁶

At the very time that the young professor delivered this discourse, his superiors noted that a development was taking place in him. As it was five years since he had left the novitiate, something of the kind was to be expected. A development, but in what direction? If we are to believe the appreciation sent to Rome by his provincial in this year, 1665, Claude, everything considered, had undergone a

⁶ *Oeuvres*, V, 502-510.

very noticeable decline. His talents are no longer thought remarkable, but simply "good." His judgment is no longer rare, but "average." His prudence is also "average." He has very little experience. His progress in studies is what one would call "ordinary," and his character "rather soft." This deterioration cannot be owing to any physical depression, since his health, hitherto delicate, is now declared to be "good." Moreover, he is judged to be fit for "teaching and preaching."¹

Such a verdict is not the doing of a "panegyrist." But, without any intention of disputing the point, it is one on which he seems to be too severe. If his talents as teacher and his progress had been really only a good average, how explain the fact that his rector chose him the following year, among all the religious of the college, even in preference to the priests, for a solemn preaching engagement in circumstances where the good reputation of the Jesuits and the glorification of an illustrious saint were concerned?

In fact, Avignon in 1666 was celebrating with a double solemn octave the canonization of St. Francis de Sales in the two Visitandine monasteries simultaneously. In the presence of the archbishop and the principal magistrates of the city, the most illustrious speakers of Avignon and some learned doctors of theology were invited to sing the praises of the new saint. In the chapel of the first monastery, all dazzling with lights and flowers, were heard successively the archdeacon and the grand vicar of Orange, the prior of the Carmelites, the definitor of the Recollects, the provincial of the Augustinians, the corrector of the Minims of Arles, and two famous preachers of the Society of Jesus, Fathers Antoine Billet and Mayre.

To associate throughout this octave a religious of twenty-five, not yet a priest, with these masters of the spoken word, might seem something of a challenge. It was the decision, taken, however, by the Rector of the College, Father Guillaume Chabrand. The sequel did not disappoint their hopes. In the very detailed account of these solemnities handed down by Sieur Giffon we read: "Saturday after

¹ *Ingenium bonum; judicium mediocre; prudentiae mediocris; experientia rerum exigua; profectus in studiis mediocris; naturalis complexio mollior; vires bonae; talentum ad docendum et concionandum. Triennial Catalogue of 1665.*

vespers the Reverend Father la Colombière delivered an exceptional discourse in honor of the Saint. He used for his text the words of Samson's enigma, "*De forti egressa est dulcedo.*" So great was the perfection and merit of this panegyric that the public would be deprived of a great satisfaction if they were not permitted to witness the plan and design of the discourse. But at the time of writing his removal places this beyond our reach." Claude had already left Avignon several months by the time Sieur Giffon decided to bequeath his recollections to the public. ¶

Lacking the contents of the address, we can call attention to a detail belonging to the background against which it was delivered. "To encourage the devotion" of those who were not able to gain entrance into the chapel of the Visitandines, an immense portico of greenery had been erected which extended "about twenty paces into the square,"—today the Place de la Pignotte. At the very top of it, the chronicler recounts, there was raised "a heart of extraordinary size, surrounded with flames and supported by two life-sized angels bearing this device, "*LUCENS ET ARDENS.*" The last days of the octave it was set afire in the midst of a display of fireworks, roman candles, rockets, fire-dragons, and such things," to the great wonder of the whole city.

The narrator seemed to be unaware that this flaming heart represented the arms of the saintly doctor, who fifty years before had written to St. Jeanne de Chantal: "Truly, our little congregation is the work of the hearts of Jesus and Mary. Our Savior in dying gave us birth through the opening of His Sacred Heart."

Thus, the first time that Father la Colombière, future apostle of the Sacred Heart, spoke in public on a solemn occasion, the heart of Jesus high above his hearers and symbolizing the graces of divine love He wishes to pour upon them, occupied the place of honor.

Claude finished his fifth year of teaching. It was more than was usually then asked of young Jesuits before their theology. At Rome, the father general, in no way disturbed by the barely favorable estimate received the year before, kept his eye on him. In the spring he had written to Father Jean Platière, provincial of Lyons: "Before you begin to think of the changes for the coming year, I want to

warn you not to make any decision in regard to Master Claude Colombière, who is teaching humanities at Avignon, because I am going to dispose of him myself, and it will be outside the province of Lyons."

Two months later, another letter gave greater detail to Father Oliva's intention. A Jesuit whose home had been in Provence, Father Stephane Chavary, had just finished his tertianship in Rome and before long was to be sent to Paris. His parents were from the city of Arles, and having shown themselves very friendly to the Society of Jesus, the general was anxious to give some sign of his gratitude. Having learned that there were ties of relationship between the Chavary and the La Colombière families, he had decided to send the two religious together on their journey to the capital.

"... At the end of the week," he wrote, May 18, 1666, "Father Stephane Chavary will leave Rome under my orders to go to Paris. I wish you would give him Master Claude Colombière as companion, who is to remain there for his theology. I let you know this beforehand so that you can find someone to replace him in the class he is teaching. Father Stephane Chavary, who will merely pass through Avignon, should not be caused the least delay, nor should his companion from lack of foresight be unready to depart. Moreover, Father Stephane Chavary will have to go to Arles for a time before he leaves for Paris, and he wishes the companionship of Claude Colombière on this journey. I have also granted this, and I wish you to be informed of this permission."

Orders were immediately given by Father Jean Platière to the rector of Avignon for a theologian of the college, as soon as he had finished his examinations, to take over the course of humanities for the rest of the year. But custom would have it—a custom recently recalled by a letter from the same father provincial—that "no one was to be allowed to take the examination in theology before August." Thus, when Father Chavary made his appearance in Avignon, doubtless towards the end of June, Claude was still engaged with his class. The journey to Arles could not take place, and the parents of Father Stephane were deprived of the consolation of seeing their son at the time desired.

Father Oliva, who knew better than any of the debt of gratitude the Society owed to the Chavary family, made it known that he was very mortified at this misunderstanding, and gave lively expression to his displeasure. Claude, who had continued to fulfill his humble task as usual, received this note from the father general by the same post:

"The letter which gave expression to your thanks has come to hand and given me great pleasure. It has been all the more gratifying to me to be of service to you as your past record makes you more worthy of this favor, and I have every confidence that you will always be so in the future."

This testimonial coming from the pen of a superior who was not over-generous with his compliments has its own value. Besides, in the abundant correspondence of Father Oliva we find no other letter to Claude La Colombière. More and more, he will be a man surrounded by silence, who neither speaks nor is spoken of, except briefly and in a low voice.

4

Theology at Paris, 1666-1670

IN sending Claude La Colombière to Paris, Father Oliva intended to do him a service. The great college which the Jesuits directed in that city was situated squarely in the Latin Quarter, between the Sorbonne and Sainte-Barbe, and was not only a powerful center of influence, but a first class coign of vantage for observing the intellectual and religious movements of the times.

It was called the Collège de Clermont in honor of Guillaume du Prat, bishop of that city, who endowed it in 1560. It was first installed in a Paris mansion on the rue de la Harpe, but before long it had to seek more commodious quarters in the Court de Longre.

Despite a thousand ups and downs, owing in part to the jealousy of the University, it often faced the threat of having its doors closed. It was in fact, suppressed from 1595 to 1618, ceaselessly attacked secretly by Protestants, openly by the Jansenists, but always enjoying the friendly protection of the kings of France. Officially "founded" a second time by Louis XIV, it received in 1682 the name of Louis-le-Grand, and was without question the most famous of the hundred educational establishments in the hands of the Jesuits under the *ancien régime*. "It had a decided influence on the nobility and bourgeoisie of that time."

To make sure of this influence, superiors watched carefully over the choice of teachers. Within its walls had taught, among others, Maldonatus, Fronton du Duc, Sirmond, and Petau (Petavius). A modern historian declares that as professors, especially of rhetoric, philosophy and theology, it was usual to send there the "elite of an elite." For Paris then gave a tone to the rest of the kingdom. "Outside of Paris," said Pierre de la Martelière, attorney for the University in 1612, "no one is civilized: it is the brain of the State." The College had to remember that. "The Jesuits were also compelled," says the same magistrate, "to keep their most competent men at Paris to wait upon *the monster*." Father general wished that La Colombière have the benefit of this selection of talent.

What influence did the young theologian undergo at the hands of his teachers? One might wish to have some precise information for this period of training, important among all, since it prepares for the priesthood. But there is no direct testimony extant. Supposing, however, the preponderating importance then given to oral teaching, it would be easy to guess what La Colombière owed to the lectures of his professors. Later he himself wrote: "If I had my theology to do over again, I don't hesitate to say that I would wish to meditate twice as much as I read. It is only by meditation that we get to the bottom of things and that we can learn the strength and the weakness of opinions."

The works published by the professors of the College of Clermont permit us to believe that the most burning topics of the day were not ignored in their courses. The rector of the College, Father

Etienne de Champs, "the hammer of the Jansenists," became well known from his doctorate theses, in which he proved that in the question of free will Jansenius joined hands with Luther and Calvin. It was a study which in 1654 gave birth to one of the most solid works of the time on the rash teachings of the bishop of Ypres, namely, *The Jansenist Heresy Justly Condemned by the Apostolic See*. Father de Champs was twice provincial, one of his terms being at Lyons. We shall have occasion to meet him again.

One of La Colombière's theology professors, Father Guillaume Ayrault, later provincial of France, also left a work on Jansenism, *Recueil de plusieurs pièces pour la defence de la morale et de la grace de Jésus-Christ*. Another, Father Jean Garnier, was connected with the study of the problem of grace through his researches in dogma and history. Because of his edition of the works of Marius Mercator on the heresies of Pelagius and Nestorius, and still more because of the learned dissertations on the development of Pelagianism which accompanied it, he rose almost to the level of Petau and Sirmond. Their colleague, Father Bernardin de Bragelogne produced less, but it is not always by the number of pages that come from a teacher's pen that his worth and influence are measured.

His professor of Sacred Scripture was no other than the illustrious humanist, François Vavasseur, a beloved disciple of Petau. Better known in the history of literature by his odes and epigrams, he was nevertheless one of the first to put Christian thought on guard against Jansenius by a work which appeared in 1650. To him also we owe a *Commentaire sur le Prophète Osée*. His explanations of the sacred text, literary no less than literal, which were strongly supported by his knowledge of antiquity, of the Fathers and the Councils, must have delighted the sharp and curious mind of his pupil. It would not be rash to attribute to this teacher, in part at least, the scriptural and patristic riches which later were to be seen in the preaching of La Colombière.

As had happened in other times with the errors of Manes or Arius, and as would happen again at the beginning of the twentieth century with the theories of modernism, it was only natural that on the morrow of the *Provincial Letters*, Jansenism with its fluid and tena-

cious subtleties, frequently caught the attention of teachers of theology. In their lectures on free will, on concupiscence, on grace, predestination, the Eucharist, they corrected its errors and excesses. This was a great advantage for the future apostle of the Sacred Heart. Having with his own eyes seen a teaching which with such melancholy effects set limits to the love of God, and left it to be understood that Jesus Christ did not die for all men, he will be better disposed to understand the timeliness of the revelations which were to confirm with so much insistence the tenderness and the universality of this love.

A strong current of optimism, however, tended to prevail then, and for almost a century thereafter, among the theologians of the Society of Jesus. As St. Francis de Sales already bears witness, they had by their opposition to Calvinism, softened the rigidity of certain theses on the impotence of fallen man, and had set a greater value on the milder and more consoling aspects of Christian dogma. Of course, the fear of God's judgments was not excluded from their lectures, nor were the necessary conditions for penance, or the strict commentary of certain teachers on the assertion of Jesus that "Many are called and few chosen," of which we shall find many surprising echoes in the sermons of La Colombière. But it seems undeniable that all this teaching was going to reveal a more exact theology of divine mercy and to shape a frame of mind which was resolutely turned in the direction of confidence. By their dogmatic and ascetical treatises, even before Port Royal had urged some restriction in the use of the sacraments, the Jesuits had made easier the approach to the confessional and the holy table—too easy, Pascal said. In the course of heated controversies, now grown old, in which shone the name of the doctor of the Church, Robert Bellarmine, they had, by the arguments borrowed from the safer and traditional teaching, made singularly easy the preaching of God's sweet mercy, by offering His merciful pardon to all His prodigal sons. It was in this way that theology opened wide the door to conclusions on the love of God which had not been fully expressed up to that time.

Such a doctrinal support was a great help later to La Colombière.

When he was consulted about the first revelations, still so mysterious, of Paray-le-Monial, he doubtless could call on a special help from the Holy Spirit. But first as a teacher he must have passed judgment on their content. It would not be enough for these revelations to seem to agree with the secret aspirations of his heart, and to fit in marvellously well with what he thought was a need of his day, if Jansenism was to be successfully opposed. He must first satisfy himself as to their orthodoxy. Thanks to the teaching he got at the College of Clermont, Claude was ready to give his approval. Without trouble, he recognized and was able to bear witness that these revelations, extraordinary as they were, far from being opposed to the fundamental teaching of the Church, brought them to a most harmonious perfection.

It would be quite useless to investigate whether La Colombière underwent any influence from the teachings of Descartes, which at the time had begun to infiltrate into some universities and colleges. As an old student of the Jesuits at La Fleche, Descartes fancied that "their Society by itself could do more than all the rest of the world to make his philosophy known, or bring it into neglect," and he often sought their support. If before 1666 there were at the College of Clermont some timid flights of Cartesianism published out of sympathy, the decree of the Roman Index which precisely on November 20th of this year was aimed at several works of the philosopher, *donec corrigantur*, must have caused them to disappear. Father Gaston Pardies, a correspondent and friend of Newton, published a *Discours de la connaissance des bêtes*, which some thought favorable to Descartes. But the work is dated 1672, and this Father did not teach at Paris during the time that La Colombière was there. One must wait until the beginning of the eighteenth century and the rapid passage of the strong-headed Breton, Yves-Marie André, to find at the College of Clermont, which by that time had become the *Collège Louis-le-Grand*, a course in Cartesianism, colored besides with certain opinions of Malebranche.

The fame of the college grew around a group of professors, many of them religious, whose names appear in the catalogue as *scriptores*. We have no wish to maintain that they were without influ-

ence on La Colombière. Father Nicolas Talon, especially with his *Histoire sainte* in four large volumes, and his numerous works on the "*Blessed Francis de Sales*," could not have left him unmoved. Still less so could Father Jacques de Machault, whether as a result of his exhortations to the community, a task laid upon him as spiritual father, or because of his studies on the Jesuit missionaries. We owe to him, in fact, many relations on the progress of the Christian religion in Paraguay, Japan, China, Malabar and Ceylon, and finally in Madura and the East Indies.

Along with them, Father Philippe Labbe, surnamed the "tireless," multiplied his learned works, and by 1661 had begun his famous *Synopse des conciles généraux, nationaux et provinciaux*, an encyclopedia in which he had the collaboration of two former professors of the College, Philippe Briet, author on his own account of seven volumes, *Annales du Monde, ou Histoire universelle*; and Gabriel Cossart, who had earlier written a number of discourses and tragedies. Under the same roof, Father Jacques Grandamy crowned his long career by editing in the form of sermons some gospel treatises on the supreme glory of God manifested in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Such was the atmosphere of learning and piety in which Claude studied theology for four years. But it was not only by these associations carried on within the college that Paris, in the judgment of Father Oliva, should be profitable to La Colombière. The Catholic renaissance which began under Louis XIII, while not the sole achievement of the capital of the kingdom, was much more in evidence there and more advanced than anywhere else. It could not be without influence in the training of an apostle to live a number of years in the extraordinary climate of reform which had produced a Berulle, a Condren, a Bourdoise, an Olier and a Vincent de Paul. Very vigorously launched, supported by a multitude of men and institutions, the movement survived those who launched it and who gave it its first impetus. Right before his eyes Claude beheld characteristic manifestations of it. Thus, the reform of monasteries, at the head of the rue Saint-Jacques, at Saint-Etienne-du-Mont, set before him the illustrious example of the canons of Sainte-Généviève. Round about him the minds of men were still stunned by the conversion of the

fiery Bouthillier de Rancé. After a dazzling youth, this Abbé, so well known in the drawing rooms of the city, was seized by a sudden thought of eternity, and giving up all his benefices, except the Abbey of La Trappe in Le Perche, led there a life of prayer and austerity. He had just made his profession there in 1664. Close by the College of Clermont, Saint Sulpice had for the past twenty years been offering a model of reform in the parochial ministry. From the quarter of Saint-Germain-des-Prés, which according to d'Abelly was "the sewer of nearly the whole of France," a center of dissoluteness and atheism where were gathered "all the monsters of vice to devour everything at once," M. Olier and his companions had undertaken to make an isle of fervent faith. Laymen too for thirty years had found in the Society of the Blessed Sacrament a hearth for their religious life and for Catholic action. From Father Rapin, who had written its history, La Colombière could have had an accurate account of its record. Although this society had been suppressed by order of Mazarin in 1660, the spirit of fervor and charity which it had awakened in the nobility and the middle classes, the magistracy and the army, continued in a very marked degree.

Mingled with so much that spoke of hope in the midst of the most correct and polished society were moral irregularities of the most shocking kind. To say nothing about the scandals close to the throne and the legitimizing by the king of children who were doubly illegitimate, we cannot help noting that the four years, 1666-1670, spent by La Colombière in Paris are the same years when the sprightly Marquise de Brinvilliers, after having brazenly tried her poisons on the poor whom she helped, and on the patients in the Hôtel-Dieu, also poisoned among other victims of her vengeance or greed, her father, her brothers, and her sister. It is the time in which was played, in the laboratories of La Voisin and others of her ilk, with the connivance of people of the highest rank, that "tragedy of poison," which ten years later was to bring before the *Chambre Ardente de l'Arsenal* 367 accused persons, some of them bearing the fairest names of France, of whom thirty-six were executed, and nearly all the others condemned to life imprisonment, to the galleys, or to

exile.¹ Their crimes were "too abominable," said Colbert, "to be put on paper, and certain details appeared so repugnant to Louis XIV, that he ordered the trial records to be burned. One understands why Christ in these very years was asking in the cloisters of Paray-le-Monial victims of reparation for so much infamy.

Paris must have contributed to the training of La Colombière in a sphere which Father Oliva certainly could not have foreseen. For the theologian, for the future director of souls, it was a piece of good luck, but a sadness also, to witness at close range certain characteristic phases of the Jansenist conflict. Even more than their learning and their subtleties, his sojourn at Paris laid open before Claude the doctrinaires and their intrigues. To witness the drama which was then being played in the two Port-Royals, the students of Mont Sainte-Geneviève, which was only a few steps from the Sorbonne, were in a capital observation post.

What pain it was for them to learn that the intellectual elite which found shelter in the celebrated Abbey of the Vallé de Chevreuse did not completely fulfill its role as a leaven for the Christian life! Genuine virtues which a revulsion from a corrupt world sometimes stamped into admirable austerities, but which were tainted with a sectarian fanaticism in revolt against the bishops of France, against the king and against the pope: undeniable literary talents which, along with pamphlets dictated by passion, were employed in producing books of edification and apologetics, solid works indeed, but which one could foresee would be without fruit for Christian souls, because their authors refused to live in communion with the Vicar of Christ. In La Colombière's hearing was sorrowfully repeated the remark of the Archbishop of Paris, Beaumont de Péréfixe concerning the daughters of Mère Angelique, "Pure as angels, proud as demons." He must have deplored a stubbornness which was turning to heresy and running the risk of provoking a schism. This tremendous waste

¹ It is the number given by Funk-Brentano who specifies that of 367 arrests, 218 were enforced. "But the most guilty were found to have accomplices so highly placed that they could not be brought to trial." (*Le Drame des Poisons*, p. 132).

of magnificent gifts of nature and of grace offered a tragic spectacle to the eyes of men who were in love with the kingdom of God.

Among the many events of Jansenist history there were two especially that during the course of his four years of theology contributed to give Claude a clearer idea of the honesty of the sectaries.

In 1667 he witnessed the stir produced in the world of letters by a translation of the New Testament called, the *Testament de Mons*. It was the work of Sacy and his friends of Port Royal. Because the chancellor Seguier had refused permission to publish in France, they had recourse to the Elzivir Press in Amsterdam, and published it under the name of a bookseller of Mons. The report was rapidly circulated that the censor, Pontan of Louvain, who had given his approval, "did not understand French," and that the permission of the diocesan authorities of Cambrai and of Namur had been secured by taking them by surprise, or extorted. In fact, the translation was intentionally misleading in many places, and favored Jansenist opinions. Following the example of Beaumont de Péréfixe, the archbishop of Paris, the archbishops of Rheims and Ambrun forbade its being read, and the following year Clement IX condemned it as "rash, dangerous, and not agreeing with the Vulgate and containing propositions that were scandalous for the weak." Despite his leniency La Colombière could not believe that in this whole affair those translators who passed themselves off as grim opponents of equivocation and mental reservation had acted with perfect honesty.

The same must be said of the negotiations which ended in the "compromise" of Clement IX, or the "Clementine peace." The four bishops of Pamier, Alet, Beauvais and Angers had refused, despite the orders of Alexander VII, to sign the condemnation, pure and simple, of the five erroneous propositions extracted from the *Augustinus*. In 1668 they were going to be judged by nine of their peers appointed by the new Pope Clement IX. In order to avoid a painful trial, and the sanctions which must have followed, several prelates, with whom the great Arnauld aligned himself, offered to mediate. After much shuffling and evasion, especially on the part of Pavillon, bishop of Alet, the recalcitrants finally yielded. They subscribed to the formulary of Alexander VII, adding that they "were fully united"

with their colleagues of France "in discipline as they had already been in doctrine." But eight days after signing, September 18th, Pavillon gathered his priests for a synod, and laid down on the infallibility of the Church, "concerning matters of fact," restrictions which took away all validity from the honesty of his signature.

The pope, however, and his councillors could not be taken in by such trickery. Even when they began to suspect the acts of the Council of Alet, they continued for some time, perhaps from fear of a schism, to use the greatest forbearance towards these willful men. From letters of Father Oliva, which transmitted the pope's instructions to the Jesuits of Paris, Claude learned of this prudence of the Roman court. "Neither by word of mouth nor in writing," commanded the father general, "should anything be said against the peace thus begun with the Jansenists. I recommend this and enjoin it on each and every one with all possible firmness." When the air is charged with electricity to such a point, especially in the wake of long and delicate discussions, one is very much inclined to let fall on the person of one's opponents bitter words and blows which should be reserved for their teachings. Father Oliva knew this. And so, he gave orders that neither in sermons nor in conversations, "should anything be allowed to escape which might wound even slightly either the bishops, or the curés, teachers, or anybody else suspected of Jansenism." Several letters insist on this point. Nothing should be said which would jeopardize the success of the negotiations. Until full light is thrown upon the matter, one must be very much on one's guard, according to a formal order of the Congregation of Propaganda, against saying "that the Roman Pontiff has been deceived or misled by the four bishops who were the last to sign the condemnation." The bruised reed must not be crushed. . . . Could one carry attempts at compromise any further?

The orders of superiors general, especially when they are repeated and insistent, create an atmosphere in communities, and initiate a movement, which must exercise some influence on all but rebellious spirits. Impressionable by nature, supple and docile by virtue, Claude must be thought to have derived some profit from these directions for his own guidance in the apostolic life that was to come.

The young theologian could have had ample information even about the slightest turns of these religious struggles from two of the members of his community in the College of Clermont, Fathers René Rapin and Dominic Bouhours, even if the rumors of them were not whirling all about him.

Rapin was twenty years older than La Colombière, and was famous among the wits of the age for his numerous poems, among which were four well known cantos on "Gardens." At this time, not satisfied with preparing *Reflexions sur l'Eloquence sacrée*," and on the *Poetics* of Aristotle, he gathered from all sides, even as far as Rome, documents for a history of his times, and especially of Jansenism. All through these tales and sketches, drawn with a pen prone to exaggerate or to jest, but always alert, we discern a critic who is prolix and merry. After two centuries, Sainte-Beuve surrenders to his charm. "You are a likable man," he declares; "you are one of those religious whom we like to find in the world, and with whom we can pass a very pleasant hour or two." All these anecdotes, to which Father Nicolas Talon, with a good sense of humor in spite of his years, must have added his own, more than once contributed some gaiety to the serious recreations at the rue de Saint-Jacques. La Colombière could not fail to catch some of their echoes.

Father Bouhours' tastes would not at all have drawn him into the quarrels with the Jansenists, nor towards any kind of polemics. He was of a quiet and conciliating nature, a man of letters who found himself at home in the world. He liked to please and to do a favor. Several years earlier, the Duke of Longueville, having entrusted him with the education of his two sons, Bouhours naturally had to live on pleasant terms with the mistress of the house, the famous Duchess, whose friendship for Port-Royal was known to every one.

Now, on the occasion of the "Testament de Mons," of which we have already spoken, and to give an answer to a resounding condemnation launched by the archbishop of Embrun, Antoine Arnauld had sent a request to Louis XIV, the firm and moderate tone of which had made an impression on a number of personages at the Court. Up to this, Bouhours had produced only two or three insignificant small works. But, well known in literary circles for his delightful language

and his delicate banter, he already cut a figure as a judge of good taste. His rector, Father Pelletier, urged him to enter the lists. He did so with his *Lettre à un Seigneur de la cour*, (1668). Deliberately avoiding the theological debate, he attacked the Jansenists on their weakest side, their stubborn resistance, their sectarian spirit, and he did not hesitate to spice his reproof with a bit of irony. "They have no scruple," he said, "in rebelling against the Church and against all the powers, but they are very scrupulous about allowing any reproach to be cast on their revolt. That reminds me of those women who show themselves very prudish, but who are not very prudent." The letter pitilessly laid bare their itch for cabals. "These good people have a rabid hatred of their opponents; these men, for all their detachment from the things of earth, carry on intrigues at court, hold secret meetings. These good priests set their piety to despising the orders of their archbishop. . . ." In their eyes, "the Church will always be in confusion and disorder, until it is governed by their counsels. . . . To be respectable and a true Christian, one must think that whatever comes from them is admirable. . . . Provided that you condemn the conduct of the archbishop of Paris, that you insult the archbishop of Embrun, and that you hate Father Annat with all your heart, your salvation is assured, your predestination beyond doubt."

The numerous refutations which the party thought should be directed against this letter, and especially the Jansenist hatred which from that time attached to Father Bouhours—"one of those hatreds which never lay down their arms and which will never let loose of you in life or death,"—bore witness that the blows had gone home.

For a controversialist this irony was perhaps necessary. But, for a priest? La Colombière certainly was acquainted with this letter and appreciated its literary qualities. Could he have been convinced as well of its apostolic usefulness? In similar circumstances, had he been commissioned to answer the sect, he would doubtless have used a less scoffing tone. Later, when in his preaching he came across one of these points of doctrine which the Jansenists have confused with their impassioned subtleties, instead of losing himself in controversy, he spoke as a theologian, and was content with setting forth the traditional teaching forcefully and clearly.

The sermons on the Holy Eucharist furnish us with a remarkable example of this serenity. They forcefully show the effects of the impassioned disputes raised by Arnauld's book on frequent communion. But as far as Claude was concerned, it was all done without passion and in the spirit of charity. He never called into question the good faith of the Jansenists. "I do not examine whether they are deliberately withdrawing from the holy table. . . . But the reasons they make use of . . . might tend to bring about an abstention from this mystery of love, even perhaps, when they did not intend it. No one will see anything wrong, therefore, in my showing that as far as the good are concerned, these reasons are without force."²

On the appearance of the Bull of Innocent XII in 1653 which condemned the "five propositions," Vincent de Paul was engaged in trying to prevent his friends from celebrating too noisy a victory, and by means of charitable and polite visits with persons sympathetic to Port Royal, he had brought about certain submissions which a vociferous attitude of victory would not have gained. Temperamentally as well as by principle, La Colombière was of the same school.

At the College of Clermont, however, Jansenism was far from absorbing the thoughts of men. In these years, 1666-1670, so rich in masterpieces of every kind, when Racine was impressing literary circles with *Andromaque* and *Britannicus*, and Molière offering his *Misanthrope*, *Tartuffe* and the *Bourgeois gentilhomme* for the debates and the laughter of the Court and the City, the educated classes had something better to do than to be brought to a standstill by the intrigues of a group of sectaries. For the oratorical formation of La Colombière especially, it was of no slight moment that he found himself at Paris at the time of Bossuet's most dazzling triumphs, just at the hour when the great bishop had the painful commission of delivering the funeral oration over Henrietta Marie of France, the "unhappy queen," and then months later, over her daughter, Henrietta Anne of England.

Claude was likewise present in the capital to witness one of the most sudden successes recorded in the annals of sacred eloquence. "Towards the end of the year," report the *Annual Letters* of the Col-

² *Third Sermon on the Holy Eucharist*, II, 56.

lege, "Father Louis Bourdaloue, after two or three sermons delivered in the church of St. Louis of the professed house, attracted so great a number of bishops and persons of quality, that the Jesuits could hardly find room in the nave or in the tribunes. The Most Serene King of Poland, Casimir, the Prince de Condé, and the Duke of Enghien honored the assembly with their presence, as did the peers of France, illustrious generals, ladies and lords of the highest nobility. For the sermon which was scheduled for three in the afternoon, servants could be seen hurrying to the church from six o'clock in the morning, in order to hold a place for their masters."³ His success was such as even to move Father Oliva in Rome, who immediately asked whether this father was "as modest and as fervent a religious as he was an admirable speaker." "On receiving a unanimous affirmation, I was filled with an incredible joy, and I can no longer refrain from congratulating the province. Please so inform the father."

Boileau, who witnessed the correction of religious opinions and the reform of morals which resulted from this preaching, hazarded, it seems, the remark to the president, Lamoignon: "The Jesuits have defeated the Jansenists in open battle: Father Bouhours with his pen, and Father Bourdaloue with his preaching."

The tares, however, which had been cast here and there among Christian souls by Jansenism, continued to sprout. To mitigate the poison there was need of nothing less than the revelations of the Heart of Jesus to remind the ungrateful world of the prodigality of His everlasting love. Unknown to men, these revelations were already being prepared. She to whom they were to be entrusted, Margaret Mary Alacoque, was struggling vainly against the divine will in these very years, and getting ready to enter the Visitation at Paray-le-Monial.

³ *Lettres annuelles de 1669*, p. 117. Bourdaloue had just been sent to Paris at the end of the summer of this year, 1669, and was stationed at the novitiate of St. Francis Xavier (on the left bank), where he was official preacher. But his successes were had "in the City," that is, on the right bank, in the church of the professed house.

With the Sons of Colbert

IN the same college in which La Colombière devoted himself to theology, fifteen hundred students, much younger than he, studied grammar and literature. For an old "regent" that must have been a very charming spectacle in spite of the noisy clamor rising from the courts. If it occasionally interrupted his intimacy with St. Thomas and Suarez, it helped at least to relieve the monotony of existence.

At the College of Clermont the course of studies was pretty much the same as that at Avignon. There was one exception, however. To be more conformable "to the wishes of the king," "mathematical sciences, and especially the section which deals with the art of fortification," were begun earlier than elsewhere. When Father Oliva was consulted, he answered that in the colleges they should do whatever might be agreeable to His Majesty. "Even more," he added, "inform His Excellency the Prime Minister that I should be quite ready myself to come and teach in France, if my work there could serve a useful purpose."

In 1667 the jubilee granted by Clement IX produced wonderful fruits among the older students. They went to other schools in search of indecent books and destroyed them. Many even dedicated themselves to circulating spiritual books and booklets among their companions. At the boarding school a large number made the Exercises of St. Ignatius for eight days. Some could be seen collecting alms for the poor, others went to serve them in hospitals. A few visited the jails to bring comfort and solace to the prisoners. This outburst of good will was put to profit to obtain from all a stricter observance of the old practice of speaking Latin. A large number of students who lived on ecclesiastical benefices, or were destined one day to enjoy them, were constrained by the wishes of their parents to dress simply

like clerics. They were even induced to join in the recitation of the canonical hours.

Two years later there was still better news. Some made the Spiritual Exercises at the novitiate of St. Francis Xavier, and others carried their charity so far as to visit the unfortunates condemned to the galleys. Among the older students especially it was a veritable reform of morals. When the father general heard of it he could not suppress a cry of joy. "So lively a piety, such a concern for discipline, so great a zeal for study, fills me with a consolation I have rarely known."

To what extent did Claude contribute to this renaissance? We cannot say exactly. And this the more so, since unlike other theologians, he had no ordinary dealings with the boarders of the college. For the *College of Clermont*, as for all the senior colleges of the Society of Jesus at this time, the catalogues clearly distinguish between the two separate communities. The first, the *collegium* properly so called, comprised, in addition to the fathers charged with the administration, the teachers, the writers, and nearly all the spiritual directors. The second, called the *convictus* (boarding school), included the religious who were more immediately concerned with the boarders. Over this latter community, a *primarius*, or "principal," was appointed, a kind of delegated superior who depended immediately on the rector.

About one half of the four hundred and forty boarders who then made up the *convictus* were about evenly divided into two vast study halls. The other half were scattered in groups of five or six into rooms where they could have a little more of home life. Halls and rooms were placed under the brotherly eye of a young Jesuit, the prefect of rooms. By way of exception, the sons of important personages could have the benefit of a special tutor in a room by themselves. Such a system of education demanded in a boarding school like that of Paris—the computation can easily be made—some thirty prefects. In fact, it employed practically the total number of theologians, many of them former prefects, and sometimes even one or other more mature student of philosophy was pressed into service.

Now, despite this imperative need of prefects, Claude is not once

inscribed in the *convictus* during his four years at Paris. Of all the young Jesuit students of theology, twenty-six or twenty-nine according to the years, he is the only one, with Mathias de Bourdonnaye in 1666 and Joseph de Jouvancy in 1669, to appear on the list for the *collegium*.

Why this privileged exception? To keep away from the boarders a man who, in view of his talents and his experience as a teacher, could do so much good cannot be explained without a very serious reason. And that? A document, which was discovered under circumstances of which we will speak later permits us to suspect the reason, if not to point it out with certainty.

Although Colbert had no love for the Jesuits, he did esteem them. In 1664 he wanted to entrust to Father Dominic Bouhours the education of his eldest son, Jean-Baptiste, the future Marquis de Seignelay, then thirteen years of age. When the boy, accompanied by his brother, Jacques-Nicolas, future archbishop of Rouen, attended the College of Clermont, La Colombière was, according to our document, assigned to Father Bouhours as assistant in this task, and later as substitute, a fact which excused him from all activity in the boarding school.

The education of Colbert's eldest son must have presented difficulties. His arrogance made him detested by his companions. Their loathing went so far that one day they planned to throw him out of a window, and they would have done so had not his father who had been forewarned called him home for a time. Colbert, the father, regretted this pride in his son. In an instruction written by himself and addressed to his son are these serious words: "My son should give some thought to what he would have owed to his birth if God had not blessed my labor and if this labor had not been extreme."

From the point of view of studies Jean-Baptiste gave more satisfaction to La Colombière. At the end of his last two years of college he was allowed publicly to defend his academic theses; first, at the end of July of 1667 for all the learning then comprised under the term "logic," and then again at the end of August 1669, for the whole field of philosophy and mathematics. The eagerness which

the most famous dignitaries of the Parliament and the Court showed on each occasion to hasten to the rue Saint-Jacques, bore witness to the influence which the father of the young graduate then wielded over the king. Congratulating Colbert, Father Oliva said: "The renown of so chosen a gathering has been singularly enhanced by the merit of the princess of the blood who have been present at this session. Our Society has received a fresh lustre from it, and I have myself felt a very lively joy because of it." The following year, the father general again wished "to join the congratulations of Rome to those of all France:" . . . "Your eldest son, of whom we had already conceived such great hopes, has surpassed all expectations in his latest defence." He added, alluding to one of those festivities by which the Jesuits stimulated the feeling of charity in their older students: "Our joy has been increased by the delicacy of your good will in coming to the college to sit with us at the common table of the poor."

A success of this kind must have increased Colbert's attachment to his son's tutor. He often invited La Colombière to his home, where so many men of letters and learning consorted with this modern Maecenas. The select society which the Jesuit found there would have been quick to appreciate the charm of his thought and his wide literary culture. From this time especially would date his relations—which we learn of elsewhere—with Oliver Patru, the man of France whose use of the French language was unsurpassed and whose influence in the French Academy was then dominant. A contemporary, Father de la Pesse tells us: "M. Patru, himself accustomed to be admired, admired the reflections of Father La Colombière touching the most delicate secrets of French style. This excellent master in the art of writing and speaking carried on a correspondence with Claude for many years, and whenever he wrote he always gave him special marks of esteem. He seemed to be consulting him when he answered his difficulties about the language." And Patru went so far as to say that this Father "was one of those men in the kingdom with the best understanding of our language."

The observations which La Colombière then made on the society of his time were a rich addition to his experience. How many of his

"*Christian Reflections*," especially in the chapters on the *World*, on *Riches*, on *The Great*, how many sketches of the manners of the times which he made use of in his sermons must have originated here!

For his spiritual formation there was even more. We cannot doubt that the young religious must have deeply appreciated the charm in such relations. We read in his tertianship notes this plaint which lays bare a heart of flesh so like our own: "But my friends love me, and I love them. You see it, and I know it. Dear God, You alone are good, alone lovable! Must I sacrifice them to You, since You wish me to be entirely Yours?"¹ He had discerned in friendships the risk there is for a soul whom God is drawing to Himself, to be undividedly His, and the danger which an intense literary life, even of devout humanism, can bring to genuine devotion.

He saw besides, all about him, this one or that among his brethren, a Rapin or a Bouhours, upright religious in other respects, but too much won over to a love of the world, lose the delicacy of their interior life. This merely moderate interest in the observances and the discipline of the religious life soon made Father Oliva uneasy, "these frequent meals with externs and the better part of the year spent at country houses." La Colombière had already seen all that. For these two "men of letters," it was, "from the beginning of the fair weather to the first frosts, a matter of coming and going, a pleasant succession of excursions, of journeys, of visits to country houses, which were a pleasant change from the narrow, bare rooms and the dull and broad walls of their College of Clermont." Could Claude be unaware of what naughty tongues were saying of them? "They serve the world and heaven by semesters." Was he misled by these examples, and tempted for a moment to let things slide along the current of an easy life? The psychologist who is always dreaming of striking conversions in the lives of the saints would readily wish so. Could the judgments or the letters of contemporaries throw some light on this point? One looks for something of the kind, but without success. The triennial catalogues which have given us a little information of the days at Avignon are no help here.

¹ *Oeuvres*, VI, 99.

In this year, 1669, on the eve of La Colombière's ordination, about which we should like to know so much, the catalogues are silent in his regard. They do not even mention his name. The provincial of Lyons, not having him under his jurisdiction at the time, can say nothing of him. The provincial of Paris, having him under his only in passing, does not think it worth while to speak of him.

In the absence of outward indications, we have the spiritual notes of the religious himself. To judge by the tears which he shed "in abundance" during his long retreat, "three or four times" in the same day, "over the rules he has so often contemned and violated,"² the supposition of a spiritual relaxation at this time is not altogether improbable. At any rate, Claude did not wait very long to correct himself. For it is in 1670, at the end of his theology, that he begins, without remission, that perfect regularity, to which four years later he was to bind himself by a special vow.

Could it be possible also at this time that the young tutor found it all too easy to comply with certain practices of the broad-minded? It would seem so, if we are to believe the story of a disgrace, the first mention of which appears in a letter of 1738, but the existence of which was entirely unknown until the end of the nineteenth century. Just how much faith can we place in this episode? If the reader is to judge, it will be necessary for him to have certain details.

In the first half of the eighteenth century, two citizens of Lyons, President Dugas, Provost of the Guilds, and his cousin, François Bottu de Saint-Fonds, had formed the habit of whiling away their leisure hours by long and frequent letters.³ Born in 1670, Laurent

² *Oeuvres*, VI, 40 ff.

³ These letters run from 1711 to 1739. President Dugas being dead, Bottu de Saint-Fonds spent the last years of his life recopying the whole of this correspondence in a very fine hand, following on some literary studies. It constituted three very large folios of nearly a thousand pages each. In 1890 one of his descendants, Jean Bottu de Limas, having to leave the Beaujolais to establish himself at Paris, made a gracious gift of it to the Jesuits of Mongré, near Villefranche-sur-Saône. At the college there was an old teacher of history, Father Comte, who was interested in the past, and who set himself the task of despoiling this rich gazette, in which he found the anecdote about which we are going to speak. He was eager to share it with Father Pierre Charrier, who at the time was working on his biography of Claude La Colombière. The latter inserted

Dugas, had at an early age been a student at the College of the Trinity, about the time perhaps when La Colombière returned there as spiritual father in his last years. As time went on he remained on intimate terms with his teachers. His home was open to them. A man of broad culture and a member of the Academy of Lyons, his conversation with them was on spiritual subjects, philosophy, science, or literature, and he kept in touch with their affairs and their traditions. His cousin had an equally curious mind and did not yield to him in the extent of his knowledge. Besides the gossip of the city, which men of distinction might exchange, these letters included not only theological discussions on current problems and a thousand details concerning the religious tittle-tattle of the day, but also judicious appreciations of recent books, such as the life of Sister Marguerite-Marie, by Msgr. Languet, or that of St. Francis Regis by Daubenton.

It was entirely by chance—in reply to a strange enough story—that President Dugas was led to talk about Claude La Colombière. His cousin had told him of the misadventure of a poor Franciscan who, preaching in the presence of the king, “suffered a violent heart attack shortly after he had begun to speak with so sudden an impulse to vomit that he did not have the strength to resist or even turn aside . . . drenching his audience as a result.” For the ladies who were near the pulpit the result was disastrous. François Bottu concluded: “People look upon him as a completely ruined man, one who will never dare to show himself again.”

“Indeed, I cannot see anything more humiliating,” answered President Dugas a few weeks later. Then, with the air of a man accustomed to pass judgment on everything from a superior point of view, he added: “It will be perhaps the occasion of that poor Fran-

it in his work (I, 78), without a sign to give any suspicion of the late date of the document. As a result Father Louis Perroy, in turn, making use of President Dugas' letter, speaks of it in good faith as “a letter of the time” (*op. cit.*, p. 50). The unwarned reader is led in fact to believe that there is question of a contemporary witness. The document is, however, at least sixty-eight years later than the episode it claims to relate. M. Guillaume Poidebard has published a part of this “literary and anecdotal correspondence” between the two cousins (Lyons: chez Mathieu Paquet, 1900).

ciscan's becoming a great saint. It was a disgrace that raised Father de la Colombière to such eminent sanctity." M. de Saint-Fonds, who had never heard of such a mishap, questioned his cousin. Two weeks later President Dugas answered: "Father de la Colombière's disgrace happened as follows. He was tutor to the sons of M. Colbert and the minister had taken a great liking to him, making much of him, and having him come frequently to Sceaux. One day, M. Colbert went to the father's room, the father having gone out, and saw lying on the table a commonplace book, written in his hand and lying open. He was tempted to cast an eye over it, and read an epigram on the mud and lamp tax which had been imposed on all the houses of Paris. It ended with this couplet:

'Colbert has got out of the mud
And fears to fall back with a thud.'

M. Colbert was deeply hurt, and asked superiors to send this father back to his province."

These lines are the only source we possess for an episode which has caused a great deal of criticism. "There is nothing more in the official documents of the day that would even permit the suspicion that La Colombière had had anything to do in any way with the sons of Colbert; nothing except the information submitted earlier and which was gathered from the catalogues of the College of Clermont.⁴ In fact, the privilege which was accorded a young theologian not to have to prefect in the boarding school, as did his confreres, is easily explained if he were the tutor of two day-students.⁵ We may

⁴ Biographers who wrote before Father Charrier (1894) did not know that La Colombière had ever lived in Paris.

⁵ The catalogues, it is true, do not mention this appointment as teacher after the name of La Colombière. But we can conclude nothing from this silence. Such entries in the catalogues were made only for the teachers of dukes or princes, and Colbert, like his eldest son, was never more than a marquis. The formula in use in the catalogues to indicate a teaching job of this kind varies. In the College of Rouen in 1659, Father Bouhours is down as *praeest illustrissimorum principum de Longavilla*; in 1661, together with Father Caullier, *cum principe de Dunois*; in 1662, *cum serenissimo duce Longavillaeo*. In the college at Paris in 1659, Fathers de Falluère and Bergiet are indicated *cum illustriss. duce d'Enguien*.

remark, however, that if La Colombière was a frequent guest of Colbert, it could have been in the castellany of Sceaux only in the very last months of his stay at Paris. In fact Colbert did not acquire this property until April, 1670.

Are we to accept the story of the epigram and La Colombière's disgrace as easily as that? Reported more than sixty-eight years after the event, would the letter of Laurent Dugas be enough to make the story authentic? Paradoxically, Henri Bremond is content to say: "The story is too good not to be true."

The famous edict of "the mud and lamps," dating as it does from 1666, lends some plausibility to the story as far as mere dates are concerned. Happy that they were able to go about without being spattered with mud at every step and without bumping at night against every pillar, Parisians very sincerely congratulated the prime minister. Father Vavas seur, Claude's professor, sought some distraction from his lectures by writing several eulogistic epigrams on the occasion. But after paying the assessment which ensued, the taxpayers, with an air of contentment, avenged themselves with the only weapon then permitted against the powerful—banter and derision. The two incriminating verses recalled the lowly origin of Colbert, whose parents had been in business at Rheims, *rue Cérès*, at the sign of the *Long Vestu*.

We are surprised nonetheless. Distinguished as was Father La Colombière, a tutor besides, that is to say, a teacher before all else of good manners, is it likely that with his own hand he would have transcribed merely as an interesting document an epigram that was offensive to the father of his pupils? Could he not have retained two verses in his memory? In his spiritual notes he wrote: "Am I unaware of what propriety demands of me when I have to deal with men?"⁶

But we have a more compelling reason for doubting,—the silence which Claude observed about this incident. It is true that we can discover in his words reflections on "the trouble wasted in the service of the world." "You will have to suffer for years without anybody taking any notice of you. But if they should happen to see a

⁶ *Retraite spirituelle du troisième an*, 99.

fault, they grumble, get angry, and dismiss you." And yet, to express himself thus, there is no need of having been "dismissed," himself. Some have also thought that they found in a sermon on *Adversity* an allusion to this unfortunate incident. The father there points out, among salutary, unexpected blows which are permitted by God to sanctify the soul, a "confusion which takes away the courage of well doing." But he also mentions, and in the same connection, sickness, loss of fortune, bereavement. He declares:

Without this accident you would never have been altogether bad, but perhaps you would never have been altogether good. Isn't it true that after you gave yourself to God, you were not able to make up your mind to look down on some glory or other, based either on some accomplishment of body or some gift of mind, which brought you some attention in company? . . . It was a slight thing, truly. But, in the end you were unable to make this slight sacrifice. It was for this reason that you had to be taken by surprise. When you were least thinking of it, the surgeon placed his lancet in the healthy flesh so as to be sure to pierce the ulcer . . . ; otherwise you would always have lived in languid ease.

If, out of all the adversities indicated above, we retain only the humiliation or "confusion," we might be able to believe, as some have done, that the speaker was here describing his own case. But he adds at once: "This fever which keeps you abed, this bankruptcy which ruins you, this insult which covers you with shame, the death of this person, will soon accomplish all that your meditations could not do, all that your directors would have attempted without success."⁷

Each one is free, of course, to see in these lines the recollection of a personal disgrace. Some will think however that the connection is not convincing. They will continue to be surprised that not even once, in the intimate notes of his retreats or his correspondence, does Claude make any allusion to a misfortune for which a spiritual man like himself could not have failed to thank God as for a grace.⁸

⁷ *Oeuvres*, IV, 368 ff.

⁸ It is useless to object that in the manuscript of these spiritual notes, which today has disappeared, similar *allusions* might very well be found, but that

They will be no less surprised that in the numerous letters written by Father Oliva at this time, either to Colbert or to the provincials of Paris and Lyons, to Fathers Annat and Ferrier, confessors to the king, to the rectors of the college and the professed house at Paris—letters which contain sometimes an account of even smaller mishaps, this mishap should have left no trace. Finally, if Father La Colombière was guilty of such imprudence, or such a blunder, is it likely that a few years later, with Colbert still in power, he would have been chosen to go to England, there to fulfill a mission that was both important and delicate?

Moreover, it does not seem that this story, considering the scarcity of documents, can be supported when confronted by sound criticism. But if in spite of all it is accepted, we should not accord it the sensation, since it is mentioned by no contemporary, which the novelist or orator so easily fancies. Is it impossible that in sixty-eight years, a story that had been bandied about in circles even the most circumspect and sincere should not have undergone some changes? Supposing that an offensive epigram had been found in the room of the religious, how make sure that it was written in his hand? Why could it not have been left on his table by some jealous or mischievous Trissotin in order to compromise him?

Again, in order to explain La Colombière's return to Lyons, there is no need of having recourse to a vexation of Colbert's. It was quite within the ordinary course of things that at the end of the summer of 1670, his theology completed, the father should return to his Province.

He had been a priest since April 6th of the preceding year, and returned to Lyons prepared for any task in the apostolic ministry that might await him. He also returned with the firm determination that if his duties ever brought him into touch with the life of the

the editor, to avoid recalling even indirectly the fact that the powerful minister had once been the subject of a lampoon, *might* well have suppressed them. Indeed, and we might even explain in the same way, the fear, namely of displeasing Colbert, the silence preserved by Father de la Pesse in his introduction to the first edition of the works of La Colombière in 1684. But here we are afloat on a sea of pure hypotheses, where evidently anything is possible.

world, he would show himself a strict observer of all the rules of his order. When his superiors sent him to the court at London they must have been aware of this.

6

Return to the College of the Trinity

FOR five full years Claude had taught grammar and literature at Avignon, conducting his students from the beginner's class to humanities. By entrusting to him the chair of rhetoric in the College of Lyons—the college of his youth—Father Paul Suffren, the provincial, gave him a testimonial of satisfaction, and allowed him to complete the cycle of his literary teaching. For a year here La Colombière had as rector Father Bertram Bras, who was followed by Father François de la Chaize, the future confessor Louis XIV.

At the same time, he was to have charge of the Sodality of the Holy Angels, which was made up of a choice group of the youngest students. He may also have been burdened with the training in public speaking of the students who were to appear in stage representations on school feast days.

In the twelve years since Claude left Lyons to enter the novitiate, the college had done nothing but prosper. Supported by the authority of the consuls, who each year escorted by the official head of the guilds came to preside as "founders" on the patronal feast of the Holy Trinity, honored also by the most affectionate protection of Archbishop Camille de Neuville, the Jesuits had transformed the school into a seat of learning and piety which went far beyond the level of what we call today secondary education. A modern author, highly qualified in the history of the city of Lyons, speaks with praise of the "courses in science" begun by these religious towards the end of the sixteenth century, not only for their own students, but

for the public at large, and which "were soon followed by every one who laid any claim to being enlightened." "There was," he says, "an extraordinary stimulus. The taste for mathematics, for physics, for astronomy spread through all classes of society. The positive, methodical spirit of these teachers agreed admirably with the character of the Lyonnais, accustomed as they were to the mathematical exactness of business dealings." The historian excuses himself for not being able to "name all the priests or laymen who, inspired by these teachers, took up the study of science."

Father Claude François Millet de Chales was most active in promoting this interest. He was the first in France to give a complete course in mathematics, "an immense work, enough to keep several persons busy and make them illustrious." in his *Principes généraux de géographie*, he said, very daringly for the times: "Copernicus made his system so probable that some are now following him. It is something wonderful that this hypothesis explains so exactly all the appearances, and particularly the directions, situations and retrogressions of the planets." By order of Louis XIV, Father de Chales was named regius professor of hydrography at Marseilles, and left Lyons by the time of La Colombière's arrival. But he returned rather frequently to look after the printing of his *Mundus Mathematicus*, in three great folio volumes which appeared precisely in 1674, and was published by the Anissons.

Although Father François de la Chaize became famous later in another line of activity, his teaching of physics when he was a professor of philosophy at the College of the Trinity had a very clear note of originality. In the eulogy delivered at his death by Gros de Boze, secretary of the Academy of Inscriptions and Literature, we read:

"A large number of experiments succeeded in bringing him fame. Seldom a day passed that he did not make one. It was not enough for him to have fresh and solid reasons, he wished that the aridity of argumentation be lost in the charm of what was seen. . . . A spirit of geometry reigns throughout all his physics. It is interesting because of the number of curious facts which are there set down, and we are surprised to find old systems so well corrected by new

discoveries; a surprise which is all the more well founded since the philosophy of M. Descartes was still kept within a small circle of chosen men and that those who were known as philosophers only looked upon it as a budding heresy.”¹

In history it was especially Father Jean de Bussi res and Father Jean Columbi who had at that time brought renown to the college. The first was known particularly for his *History of France* in Latin, in which the life of St. Louis justly received a favorable treatment. The second, a tireless researcher, had published a *Suite chronologique* or *Catalogue raisonn * of the bishops of Sisteron, Viviers, Vaison, Valence and Die, and was preparing a similar work for the archbishops of Lyons and the bishops of N mes.

In grammar, prosody, poetry, Father Laurent de Celli res, a colleague of La Colombi re in the chair of rhetoric, was very well known in his day. Greater still was Father Fran ois Pomey, author of a Latin dictionary, a history of mythology, a catechism of theology, and some books of devotion. He ended his career at Lyons, dying there November 10, 1673.

But the Jesuit most honored during these years, not only by the College of the Trinity but by the whole city, was Father Claude-Fran ois Menestrier. He was born at Lyons in 1631. He had a first class mind, a prodigious memory, an intelligence that was inventive and brilliant. As ready a speaker as he was writer, this father had gifts of very high order. For sixty years he was a relentless worker. He surprised his contemporaries by the wide extent of his knowledge, profane as well as sacred. And yet this “universal man” was not a dry-as-dust savant. On the contrary, he was gifted with a very happy disposition which blossomed out into what the historian Colonia called his “sunlit features.” We owe to him no less than a hundred treatises or works on the most varied subjects: *Maxims on the Mysteries of the Life of our Lord*, *Funeral Orations*, *Canonization Sermons*, *Heraldry and Nobility*, *Tourneys and Carrousels*, the *Entr es of Princes*, *Ballets*, the *Divining Rod*, *Hieroglyphics* and *Talismans*, the *Centuries of Nostradamus*, the *History of Louis the*

¹ Quoted by Father Gaston Sortais, *Le Cart sianisme chez les J suites fran ais*, Archives de Philosophie, tome VI, cahier 3 (1928).

Great from Medals, Coins, and Mottoes, and especially the *Civil and Consular History of the City of Lyons*, which his death in 1705 prevented him from carrying beyond the reign of Charles VI.

Because of these courses in science and history, and also those of rhetoric and philosophy, each of which was carried through two years, the College of the Trinity had the appearance for the country roundabout of a small university. It also formed, as we shall see, a center of the apostolate and of Catholic action.

For a religious who is just beginning his sacerdotal ministry, to return to a city where he has spent long years of study, where he can again take up old acquaintances and companionships of former years and come into contact once more with his relatives, is to begin with a decided advantage. By his marriage with Madeleine Paquet, Humbert La Colombière, Claude's elder brother, had found his way into a family of Lyonnais magistrates with an offspring of twenty-one children. His younger brother, Joseph, after brilliant law studies, had just been chosen this very year of 1670 to deliver the doctoral address on the feast of St. Thomas, December 21st, the day on which the new consuls were proclaimed. From all of which the name of La Colombière must have received a fresh luster.

The feast of the Most Holy Trinity was very solemnly celebrated every year. During the course of the Mass, which was sung towards the end of the morning, as soon as the gospel was chanted, the rector accompanied by other fathers of the College came and offered a candle to the consuls. The candle bore the arms of the city and was stamped with the name of Jesus in an oval that sent out golden rays in a field of blue. Speeches were exchanged, followed by mutual good wishes, which they prayed God would bring to fulfillment through the grace of the Holy Sacrifice. After the Mass, a contest was held, usually under the presidency of the Commissioner of the province. It consisted of "verses prepared by the students, and was held in the great hall of the college." The audience sat, each with ears alert and eyes closed, the better to hear the keen and clever epigrams in praise of the notables present. Finally, to conclude these pleasant festivities, every one went "to dinner, which the City, following a praiseworthy custom, provided this day at the college." At this dinner a large number of the fathers paid their charges

with the only money at their disposal, "some very fine talk in different languages."

On one occasion not so very long before the arrival of La Colombière, this entertainment was set off with a ballet. The works of Father Claude Menestrier contain one such composition on "the destiny of Lyons, which was danced the 6th of June 1658." These dances of the college students had nothing in common with the dancing of our day. They were rhythmical, or better still, cadenced movements, comparable to the harmonious dances of the old provinces of France, the steps of which were for the most part allegorical. As certain accounts, however, which were sent on to Rome to the father general, referred to these dances under the ambiguous name of *saltationes*, they had at different times been forbidden. In 1664, Father John Paul Oliva felt called upon to congratulate the rector of the College of Lyons for having suppressed these "dances which a deplorable abuse had introduced for the solemn feast of the Most Holy Trinity."²

The patronal feast of 1671, the first in which La Colombière was to take part, well nigh put the whole college into mourning. On Friday afternoon of May 22nd, a dress rehearsal was to have taken place in the presence of the professors and an immense crowd of spectators. The hall occupied the second floor. To the weight of the stage, they had for the occasion imprudently added an enormous amount of stage machinery. All night long this extra weight bore down upon the supporting girders. Early in the morning, a few hours before the opening of classes on the floor below, a prolonged and dreadful crash was heard in the deep silence of the sleeping college. A part of the ceiling which was torn away from the walls fell, dragging with it in a tangled mass all the stage preparations. Happily only two were found to have been slightly hurt, a student of theology who doubtless was working at the decoration of the hall, and a carpenter.

Two days later, while receiving the councilmen and the consuls,

² To Father Jean Platière, July 29, 1664. In an earlier letter to Père de Lange, Provincial of Lyons, the general had renewed his prohibition, declaring: *ejusmodi saltationes minime instituto nostro et diei sanctitati convenire* (April 8, 1664). On this question of ballet in Jesuit schools, cf. three conferences by R. Lebègue in the *Revue des Cours et Conférences*, 1936.

Father Bras could say: "This awful collapse of our hall, which surely would have taken place while you were gathered here, would have made itself heard throughout all France, and sent its echoes traveling all over Europe. It would have inflicted undying wounds in all good hearts, who would have wished to be buried with you under the same ruins, being unable to survive so great a loss." Had Claude been engaged to deliver the address on this occasion, he would surely not have been as emphatic as this. But he gave God his fervent thanks.

Repairs were planned at once. "Having regard for the great services which the college every day renders to the public by the education and instruction of the young," the consulate voted nine thousand pounds. This sum was enough to rebuild a great domed hall on ground level with the courtyard, and allowed for the erection of twenty-two classrooms.

La Colombière also witnessed the growth of the library. The library, placed "above the chapel of the notables," had been organized and richly furnished by Father Menestrier, but after ten years it could no longer contain all the books which had accumulated from the liberality of donors, especially the archbishop of Lyons. In a house which had been built on the opposite side of the *rue Neuve*, a library was installed which was much more commodious than the old one, and was connected with it by means of an archway built in the grand style. In his thanks to the consuls for the sums promised for this new construction, Father de la Chaize said: "Our Muses will no longer regret their Parnassus. They will be much more magnificently lodged in the two sumptuous apartments which you have prepared for them than they could have been on those two hills which myth had raised for them."

One benefaction calls for another. Close to the library there was a dwelling which deprived the students of light and blocked the view over the Rhone and the countryside beyond. Camille de Neuville bought it and presented it to the college. Although it was quite new and of a pleasant aspect, he added four hundred pounds to have it razed to the ground. Counting the surrender of his seignorial rights over the land which he made at the same time, this gift was estimated to be worth more than seven thousand pounds.

Including the archbishop and the consuls in the same commendation, the rector of the college ventured to say a few years later: "Visitors come to admire this court of learning which opens the temple of wisdom and glory to all the nations. They are surprised at this library, which is surely one of the wonders of Europe. We have to give it such dimensions to make it capable of holding all your benefactions."

When La Colombière left Paris, Father Bouhours, having incurred the enmity of the Jansenists by his *Lettre à un Seigneur de la Cour*, asked him to send, in view of eventual replies, the observations he might gather concerning the works published by Port^o Royal. Claude had agreed, happy at one and the same time to oblige a friend and to keep posted on the religious movements of the times by such reading. At the beginning of his professorship he had even found leisure to write some remarks of his own. But then the whirlwind of teaching had hemmed him in with its demands. . . . At the end of the school year, July 1st, probably 1671, he stated in a letter to Father Bouhours that "the providence of God seemed to take pleasure" in preventing him from keeping his promise, and "in depriving him of the most sensible consolation he had in this life."

"I am overwhelmed with unpleasant engagements," he added, "and to complete my misfortune, I am not able to apply myself to any of them. I am so glad that your headaches are allowing you some rest this year; but I believe that it is now my turn. If I had as much patience as you, I think I should profit more from the pain I feel.³ I am not sending you any observations, as I have found it impossible to finish the sheet which I began a long time ago."

This letter, the earliest that we have, reveals a La Colombière quite different from the one we shall find in the letters of direction. It still smacks of the literary circles which could be even jovial when he frequented them at Paris. Is it because the author by an unconscious mimicry, takes on the tone of his correspondent, or simply

³ These headaches doubtless gave him sometimes something of a pained expression, and hence the remark in the triennial catalogue of 1672: *naturalis complexio temperata, vergens ad biliomelancholicam*. But his health was good: *vires firmæ*.

because he was younger, or because he had not yet given up the language of the world? Still, the fact remains that if we were not in possession of the autograph, we might cast some doubt on the authenticity of the letter, and think that it came from the pen of some witty frequenter of drawing rooms. But wishing in fact, in spite of his weariness, to help his friend answer the letters he was threatened with, Claude suggested: "If you find occasion to twit these gentlemen on the style and character of the works they have given to the public . . . I think that would be an admirable course. I have never seen anything so ridiculous in my life." He then gives an example—the mania for endless digressions,—borrowed from the *Life of Dom Bartholomew of the Martyrs*, written by the Solitaries, and adds: "That seems to me to be so funny that I cannot help laughing every time I think of it. The whole history of the Council of Trent is brought into this work almost in the same manner." A few years later we could doubt that such a laugh could be perceived in this man. And much less still the assurance, a bit caustic, with which he ends the page. "Take the trouble of reading the books they have written. I hold that they are full of stupidities and absurdities."

All in all, however, these lines have a way about them. La Colombière's observations do not limit themselves to mere quibbling. It is at their whole manner of writing history that he balks, justly, and in "very strong terms." Hence, a master of criticism, Henri Bremond, could say, after having quoted generously from this letter: "The critical confraternity, not having as yet a patron—we relinquish St. Jerome to the Academy of Inscriptions—has one here. For Father Claude will surely be canonized one day, and perhaps soon; tomorrow if I had anything to say about it."

Humanist of a very refined and unfailing taste, La Colombière did not have to employ these gifts for the benefit of criticism, at least by writing, or for the general public. But these gifts were a good augury for the teaching of literature which he was going to do at the College of the Trinity. For three years his students of rhetoric were to have the benefit of them.

Professor of Rhetoric, 1670-1673

HAPPY people have no history. Neither has the professor. There are no reversals of fortune in his existence, but a labor which is always the same, stimulated by the hope of seeing children of his mind come to life.

To throw some light on the teaching life of other saints—St. Francis Regis, for example—we have the testimony of their former students at the process of their beatification. But there is nothing of the kind for Father La Colombière. We are not, however, reduced to mere conjectures. Two discourses—a kind of program of discourses—delivered on the occasion of the opening of classes, and some pages from *Réflexions chrétiennes*, on the education of the young, allow us to get a glimpse of the main outlines of his teaching and to acquaint ourselves with his turn of mind.

Comparing the golden age of Rome with the golden age of Athens, the age of Augustus with the age of Pericles, the orator does not hesitate, surprisingly, to prefer the age of Augustus. To his own age of the Renaissance, he has not made even an illusion. Had he done so, he would probably have shared the feeling of Boileau for its grossness, and of Fénelon, a few years later, for its barbarity.

Nevertheless, the conclusion of the young master is far from being an admission of despair. "Let us exert ourselves," he encourages his audience, "to tend towards the glory of the ancients, even if we do not attain to it." And for their encouragement, he draws with a fine optimism a picture of the progress which is to be seen on all sides, the most unmistakable sign of which is, as he sees it, that our contemporaries "have no esteem or taste for anything that does not savor of the age of Augustus."

"We have understood,—and because our neighbors [Italians and Spaniards doubtless] have not, they waste their talent and their efforts in the accumulation of voluminous works,—we have understood what propriety, reason, and a sense of moderation demand of each of us. We know what distinguishes the sweet from the insipid, the vulgar from the simple and unadorned; what difference there is between the naive and the affected, the noble and the pompous, the graceful and the beautiful, the brilliant and the conceited, the humour and the clownish, in a word, that which separates the spirit of nicety from ingenious subtlety. Such henceforth is the excellence of the French tongue, that for sweetness, rhythm, brilliance, majesty and richness it leaves nothing to be desired. The French name itself seems to have become everywhere abroad a synonym for politeness, purity, polish."

When, in the fall of 1672, the speaker was setting forth these delicate nuances with such precision, and lifting up this cry of hope before hundreds of Lyons boys, Bossuet was delivering the most beautiful of his funeral orations, Racine publishing his first masterpieces, Boileau applying the file to his *Art of Poetry*, and Molière, with his *Femmes savantes*, had fought his last battle for good taste. One will agree that the professor had his eyes wide open on his own times, and that his judgment was sure. But when he adds, as he draws to an end, that "if we wish to preserve these advantages, to make them ours for good, and to increase them, it will be enough to re-read frequently the best works that remain to us from the Augustan age and reproduce them by imitating them," the advice is lacking in boldness. Still he was talking to students in their formative years, and he had no intention of drawing up a definite plan for a literary reform. When La Colombière must himself give the example and write, he will know how to be more independent. His thought only anticipated that of Fénelon: "If ever you succeed in surpassing the ancients, it is to themselves that you will owe the glory of having surpassed them."

He appears more modern still, and closer to us, in his ideas on education. Both in his dealings with the older students, to whom he teaches rhetoric, and with the younger ones who are confided

to his care in the Sodality of the Holy Angels, the religious finds out with sorrow that the parents often undo by their manner of speaking and acting the education their sons are getting elsewhere.

"Is it not surprising that Christian parents place before their children only human motives to encourage them to do what is asked of them, and that everything tends to nourish the love of comfort and ambition? 'This man' they tell them, 'who was of low birth, has made himself important by his eloquence, and has been promoted to the most illustrious offices, has acquired great wealth, married a very rich wife, has built a superb mansion. He has made himself feared, he is in the limelight of renown' They never think of giving them for models any but those who have made their way in the world. They never speak to them about those who are reigning in heaven."

Could there be some personal recollection in what he adds? "If another undertakes to speak to them of such things, he is rebuked as though he were a man who wanted to destroy everything." So wretched a beginning did one's education have at home!

"When a mother brings a child into the world, everything is done for her. The child passes from her bosom to the hands of a nurse who, with her milk, inspires him with her own coarseness and all her evil inclinations. From the hands of a nurse, he passes to those of a governess, peevish, choleric, opinionated, whose greatest care is that the child be not seen in its mother's room. Then a tutor takes over. It is not known whether he is vicious or good. He is chosen at random. A relative, a friend, someone who doesn't care has chosen him. It is all right provided he keeps from the eyes of the father and mother the little excesses of this child, of whom you have less care than you have of the horses, to the grooming of which you are going to attend."

Was the college going to apply a remedy to all that? Many hoped so, in the twentieth century also. "Correct that child; use the rod even, if need be. I give you full powers." An illusion like this is not new. Let us hear what La Colombière has to say. "I admit that many entrust their children to men who are wise and prudent. But that is not enough,—a bit of authority transferred to those who are

charged with the education of your sons. Eliseus sent Giesi with his staff to give life to the only son of the Sunamite woman. Neither Giesi nor the staff was able to accomplish anything; Eliseus himself had to come." The need for collaboration is evident.

In the following passage one might think that he is present at an incisive, persuasive conversation in the college parlor; or better still, at a meeting in which a troubled conscience is getting some direction:

What are you doing at home if "you do not busy yourselves in the upbringing of your children? It is the only thing you have to do. It is in this that God wishes you to serve Him. It is for this that He has established Christian marriage. It is of this that He will demand an account of you. You have amassed property for them. Is this what God expects of you? 'Come now,' He will say to you on the day of judgment, 'give me an account of that soul that I have confided to you. What has become of it? That was your field, the vineyard which the Lord had given you to cultivate! . . . ' To what degree of holiness have you led them? With what principles have you inspired them? Are they good? Do they fear God? Are they instructed in our mysteries? Some will have no answer to make, for they will not know what to make of these questions.

Being present at such an interrogation will make one think. Fortunate the souls who having found such a director, accept him and allow themselves to be led by him. They are in no danger of remaining merely ordinary parents.

In this same fall of 1673, when La Colombière was delivering these discourses, a young Italian woman, Mary Beatrice of Este, arrived at Lyons. Her recent marriage by proxy at Modena had just made her Duchess of York. She was on her way to London to join her husband, James, brother of Charles II, whom she had not yet met. By this marriage she became granddaughter of Henry IV, cousin of Louis XIV, and had the right to princely honors. At the city hall, October 22nd, the aldermen and the consuls of Lyons offered her as well as her mother, the Princess of Modena, the Marquis de Dangeau her uncle, and her whole suite, a sumptuous reception. Who then at the College of the Most Holy Trinity would have suspected that this young duchess would before long offer an oc-

casion to Father Claude of going over to England, there to preach, to suffer, and to become a confessor of the faith?

8

Preaching and Reform

IN September 1672 Father La Colombière was relieved of the responsibility of the Sodality of the Holy Angels and found himself placed in charge by his rector, Father de la Chaize, of the Sodality of the Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin. This Sodality was made up from the classes of rhetoric and humanities, and allowed him to exercise greater influence over his own students. The next year, he gave up his teaching and became preacher in the Church of the College of the Trinity.

For the greater number of our contemporaries the name of college simply suggests the idea of an establishment for the instruction of very young people. In the seventeenth century the colleges of the Society of Jesus, especially in cities where preachers and missionaries had no residences of their own, included along with the teachers a few religious who were set aside for the apostolate beyond the precincts of the college. Some bore the title of prefects of various sodalities whose members were persons of importance, or working men. Others were *operarii*, that is, apostolic "workers," catechists or preachers. The professors themselves were sufficiently numerous, and their teaching loads so divided among them as to enable them to contribute, at least on Sundays, to the religious instruction of the faithful. Thus, during La Colombière's teaching years at Lyons, the *Annual Letters* of the College indicate that catechism was taught throughout the entire year in fifteen different places, and that every Sunday thirty *operarii* went out to give themselves to works of zeal, both within and beyond the city limits. Thirty, that supposes that

even young priests, fourth year theologians and, doubtless, some scholastics not yet ordained, took part in these labors, at least to the extent of teaching catechism.

In the days when Claude was a student at the Trinity, several sodalities were flourishing. One, under the title of the Assumption, was made up of the most important men of the city, and two others were for workingmen, grouped according to their age under the title of the Purification and Nativity of Our Lady. In 1669, a new one had been added for the street-porters, which raised the total number of sodalists to three thousand. In the fervor of its beginnings this last addition achieved wonders.

"Every Sunday, besides the ordinary exercises of the sodalities, one could behold these good men accusing themselves—without shame—of their public sins of having insulted their neighbor, taken God's name in vain, of having doomed some one to the demon, been too fond of wine, and not fond enough of their wives. In return they received public penances which they performed quite readily. Their wives, thunderstruck at seeing their husbands changed into meek lambs, profited by their example and became obedient sheep, and never grew weary of singing the praises of a sodality that could work such miracles."

The most original of these activities was a mission preached at the college for the donkey-drivers from the truck-gardens on the outskirts of the city.

The truck gardeners of Lyons (according to the college annalist), for the most part dwellers in the outskirts, ordinarily have in their employ one or two men whose only task is to drive a donkey through the streets gathering up all the refuse out of which they make midden heaps for fertilizing their fields. These poor men are in general very old, some of them being eighty or more. Some of our fathers, observing that their souls were as ill cared for as their bodies, took it into their heads to apply a remedy. A mission was arranged for them, especially on feast days, throughout a period of three months. Five hundred of them attended. One can hardly describe the thirst they manifested for the rudiments of the catechism. It was enough to bring tears to one's eyes. These ignorant men accepted everything so easily that it can hardly be thought that

our older students would have been able to give better answers on different points of Christian doctrine, or make their confessions with greater clearness and exactness.

It was this center of apostolic work that La Colombière by his appointment as preacher in the church was expected to develop. Every Sunday and feast day he had as congregation an intellectual elite made up in large part from the Sodality of Notables. It was a delicate and conspicuous task, one which was ordinarily entrusted only to experienced speakers who had already served their apprenticeship. Father de Champs, who had a chance to appreciate Claude's abilities in Paris, thought that he would in this way open a career to him in France which would do honor to his Order. Without knowing it, he helped to prepare him for a distant mission, which in spite of its apparent brilliance was to be an obscure martyrdom. When in fact La Colombière was hastily appointed "preacher to the English Court," his best provision for the journey was found in the sermons he had preached during these twelve months, whether at the Trinity, or in the different parishes or communities in Lyons.

His sermons having been published for the most part under the form they received in London, we cannot if we follow the text, get an idea of the sermons delivered in Lyons. We will keep a general study of them for a later chapter.

Among those, the text of which has come down to us just as they were delivered at Lyons, we must first reckon four sermons: to the Carmelites, for the feast of the scapular; to the Poor Clares, for a clothing; to the college, for the feast of St. Joseph and for the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin. In addition to these there were two panegyrics; one of St. Bonaventure, delivered in the Church of the Franciscans,¹ and the other of St. Francis Borgia.² It would

¹ *Oeuvres*, II, 455. We know that St. Bonaventure died at Lyons in 1274, during the Council which had been called by Gregory X, in an effort to bring the Greeks back to the Roman faith. In 1674, therefore, the fourth centenary of his death was celebrated. The four sermons are also from 1674; to the Carmelites, July 16 (II, 377); at the Poor Clares, August 22nd (III, 1); at the college, March 29th and September 8th (II, 329, 407).

² *Oeuvres*, II, 487.

be easy to discover here a reflection of certain anxieties which for a long time had perplexed the delicate, slightly timid, but always quivering soul of the holy religious.

Claude had no need of the warning of St. Paul to the Corinthians to be aware that "knowledge puffeth up" (I Cor. 8:4), and exposes us to the danger of self-complacence; that dialectics and prolonged reasonings dry up the heart and have a tendency to kill devotion. Because they allowed themselves to be misled by the seduction of study or the incense of praise, some have had their heads turned, others have gone plunging into the abyss. The more he experienced the charms of learning and the joy of success, the greater became his fear of them. Would it not be easier to remain humble and devout in a Thebaid or a Charterhouse? It was subtle temptation which would lead to nothing less than the paralyzing of his zeal, or even—and he shares the secret more than once—bring ruin to all his apostolic work. Against this impression the whole life of St. Bonaventure raises a vigorous protest. If there was in fact no one in his century who "carried further the learning of the Scriptures and of the School," there was also no one who felt "a deeper humility," or "a more tender devotion." All the time that La Colombière was pleased to point this out for the instruction of his hearers, he was instructing and reassuring himself. Here, then, we have learning, the gift of the Holy Spirit, cleansed of every reproach. If it happens to make some hearts proud or dry, that is only because of our own evil dispositions. We must "not deform the nature of learning," but after the example of this "humble and devout doctor of the Church," we should learn "how to take our place among the glorious slaves of love."³

In the sermon for a clothing we detect the quivering of a still more sensitive fear. There can be no apostle without a great love. It is the teaching of Jesus, and Jesus gives us the precept and the example. He has loved to excess. Had He not a love of preference for one of His disciples? Without doubt. But in our poor human heart, this heart of flesh, what danger there is in this love! What a risk we run in taking complacence in it, instead of availing our-

³ *Oeuvres*, II, 455-486.

selves of it to be borne towards God! How many acts of rapine in a love which the heart would like to have entirely for the good Master, the only Master. Claude was aware of this danger. On this clothing day, he went on, before the forbidding grille, to reveal the demands of divine love, and in doing so revealed also the depths of his own soul: demands so absolute that he is afraid of astounding even the Poor Clares who having vowed an absolute despoiling of themselves are better able than others to understand. "What I am going to say will surprise you, and yet there is nothing truer. . . ." Then with a severity mingled with sweetness, and almost all in a breath, he delivers his message:

The jealousy of your Spouse extends to everything that could inspire any feeling of friendship or of tenderness. If you wish to be entirely pleasing to Him, you will renounce all inclinations, you will have no particular friend, no confidant; you will forget even your nearest relations, and you will wish them to forget you. Is there a friendship more laudable, more apparently holy, than that which you could have for a director who shows you the way to heaven? And yet, if you are too attached to this director, if you desire too eagerly to speak with him, however holy the conversation may be, if you are not ready to give him up at the first word, this would be enough to cause pain to your chaste Spouse. Even more, He will sometimes be jealous of the very persons whom He bids you to love. He wishes that you love all those with whom you are going to live in the future, and that you love them as yourself. But if into this love something human enters, and if you give greater signs of it to those who have either more intelligence, or more gentleness, or even more kindness towards you, so that there might be reason to think that it is not He alone whom you love in each of them,—if that were to happen my, dear Sister, He will think that He has reason to complain of you, and it will not be long before you become aware of His disappointment.⁴

Here was the message of a lofty spirituality wrapped in a penetrating psychology. In this sermon, which was one of his first, La Colombière already displays one of the most restless of his anxieties concerning his love for God. A few months earlier, when his sister

⁴ *Oeuvres*, III, 24.

Marguerite took the habit at the Visitation of Condrieu, the sermon which Claude gave, "all aflame," as the annalist of the convent puts it, must have borne a close resemblance to this.⁵

The two sermons on the Blessed Virgin, mentioned earlier, bear witness at one and the same time to the doctrinal and tender devotion which Claude always had for the Queen of Heaven. In that of September 8th, we once more detect a last quiver of his apostolic soul.

This feast of the Nativity 1674 marked the end of his preaching in the college Church. It was his last contact with his "beloved hearers." There was a pang in his heart. Had he done his duty sufficiently during these twelve months? Had they done theirs? He puts the question directly, urgently, tracking down all pretexts, and calling for an examination of conscience.

I do not ask you whether you have loved God as much as has the Blessed Virgin. That was not in your power. . . . Only allow me, my brethren, to ask an accounting of you at least of the graces which you have received this year. . . . Tell me frankly, have you drawn any profit from them? Are you better than you were a year ago? Is your anger not always as violent? That aversion for the person of your neighbor, that ever active envy of his prosperity? Is that thirst for gold and silver as insatiable? Is that attachment to the world and its vanities still as strong as it was a year ago? Are your prayers made with more reverence, your confessions with more care, your communions with more preparation and more fervor? What have you retrenched from your love of comfort and pleasure for the love of Jesus Christ? What have you added to the alms which you were accustomed to give? Do you feel a greater submission to God's will, a greater patience in the trials that come upon you?

You may tell me that things were not told you forcefully enough, nor eloquently enough, to move you. But what will you say to God who, notwithstanding the weakness and the coarseness of the sermon, has not failed to make Himself heard in your heart, and to urge you to do that

⁵ Marguerite La Colombière had first stayed for some months in the Visitation of Bellecour. Recalled to Vienne by the sickness of her father, she entered, on his recovery, the convent of Condrieu, where she took the habit in May 1674, and lived to the age of eighty-five. She died February 8, 1734.

which you know very well? Indeed, I should be very unfortunate, and I should have preferred never to have ascended this pulpit, if I have spoken only to give occasion to reproaches which you could not help making! It is not story-telling that is preached to you. You hope in vain to die a holy death after a life that has been scarcely Christian. . . . What! Do you really want to die in this sin, in this bad habit, with this attachment, with this imperfection, before you have obeyed the voice of God who is calling you? Do you wish to go to appear before God ere you have given yourself wholly to God? ⁶

But all ends in a cry of hope. "What a consolation for me, if on separating from you I could be sure of leaving Mary" in your heart! Dear God! May she bring to good fruit the truth for which I have tried to make an entrance!"

On finishing his teaching and the first year of his preaching, it is thus that Claude appears to us,—solicitous to belong to God without reserve so as to be able to promote His kingdom with a purer, a more victorious zeal, free even from all natural attachment to study and to the souls entrusted to him.

These exterior manifestations were but signs of an interior struggle, which, ever since his ordination, and especially during the last three years, was at work in his heart. It was a profound transformation, for which events were the occasion, and in which his rector, Father de la Chaize, does not seem to have acted as a mere spectator. Moreover, this superior in the years to come will play a very important role in Claude's career.

By birth a Forezien, grand-nephew of the famous Father Coton, confessor of Henry IV, brilliant professor of rhetoric and philosophy at Lyons, François de la Chaize soon attracted the attention and won the confidence of Archbishop Camille de Neuville. When in 1668 he was sent to Grenoble to settle certain difficulties which had arisen against the Jesuits in that city, the prelate very openly complained to Father Oliva, alleging that he had need of the father's counsels. Without delay Father de la Chaize was recalled to Lyons, and named rector of the *Collège de Bon Secours* which was situated hard by the archiepiscopal palace, so as to be at the disposal of the

⁶ *Oeuvres*, II, 340 ff.

archbishop. Two years later, when Father Suffren, the provincial, wished to have him as his *socius*, the father general bade him do nothing without the consent of Camille de Neuville.

The presence of Father de la Chaize at the College of the Trinity was of no small advantage in putting an end to certain infractions of religious discipline, a result perhaps of the national wealth and prosperity which signalized the epoch. A young king who was sincerely loved, but already over-flattered, about whom were gathered the provinces of France like a great family after having been shaken by religious dissensions and wars; the brilliant civilization which developed at his touch, the glory, and more still the magnificent hopes which radiated from his person—could anything more be needed to cause a kind of collective exaltation to pass over the kingdom? We should not be surprised that the colleges were not completely unresponsive to it. There was grandeur and there was distress.

In 1671 these failures in discipline could not have been very widespread, since two years earlier the father general had rejoiced to see so good an observance at the College of the Trinity. He wished even to congratulate the rector for it, "and especially the older fathers, whose virtue and example contributed not a little to draw the younger men to the practice of perfection."⁷ On August 20, 1669, he had directly congratulated the rector, Father Bertram Bras, on the excellent deportment in his college.

There were infractions, however. *Felix culpa*, we might be tempted to say. Happy fall, over which it would be wrong to throw a veil, seeing that it coincided with the stern reform which Claude, by a generous response, began to exact of himself. It creates the atmosphere and in a sense partly explains it.

For several years Father Oliva was much pained to see a large number of religious in the Province of Lyons abandoning their vocation.⁸ "These defections," he wrote, "come from two causes.

⁷ Letter to Father Suffren, provincial, January 1, 1669.

⁸ ". . . de stupenda multitudine eorum qui a Societate deficiunt in ista provincia." To Father de Lange, rector of the Trinity, August 16, 1667. ". . . ingens illa juniorum copia qui in Lugdunensi provincia a Societate desciscunt." To Father Suren, September 11, 1668; *idem*, July 22, 1670.

There is a certain rigidity among superiors which drives them to govern the young harshly, as though they were servants, and not with kindness, as though they were sons; or a kind of disdain which causes them to be indifferent to their behavior, their studies, or even their temporal needs. Among inferiors there is a lack of the supernatural spirit, tepidity in their devotion, a broadmindedness in their way of living, which the younger men pick up in the colleges in imitation of a few of their elders.”⁹ He goes on to recommend “more vigilance in forbidding the reading of modern authors and poets,” which does no more than cram the mind with “vain curiosities, trifles and love stories which are frequently offensive to chastity.”¹⁰ There is still, “in spite of so many earlier admonitions, excessive gossip, both in the house, in the parlor, and even at the grilles of convents after the sermons on feast days!”¹¹ There was, briefly, a general negligence, a letting things go—that at least is the opinion of some consultors—which gives the theologians of the senior college an air of little recollection, of being hairbrained, to the great scandal of secular students who are following the same courses.¹²

Here and there also are seen some offenses against poverty and the spirit of sacrifice. “The use of chocolate, until now holily avoided in the Province of Lyons, begins to creep in, and to pass easily from older fathers to younger men. Some importune their extern friends for money to procure this.” And so, Father Oliva “absolutely forbade the use of chocolate.” He “would do so in virtue of holy obedience if he were not confident that each one, after serious consideration in God’s presence, would find a motive in his zeal and devotion for renouncing it spontaneously.” On this point

⁹ To Father Suffren, September 11, 1668.

¹⁰ To Platière, provincial, September 6, 1667, and April 3, 1668. What is blamed is the reading of novels and dangerous or frivolous poetry, not the study itself and use of the French language. They would have been very fortunate to have—to say nothing of Bourdaloue—a Bouhours or a Rapin to answer these gentlemen of Port Royal. And would to heaven that they had possessed more able men still, and a large number of them.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, and to Father de Lange, rector of the Trinity, former provincial, August 16, 1667.

¹² To Father Suffren, January 14, 1670.

he reserved to himself the power of dispensing, declaring very clearly that he "would grant the permission to use it only to fathers who were weighed down by age or infirmity, on the grounds that this food was then considered as a tonic." "Others who were younger and stronger were clearly to understand that they should not in any way even dream of getting it."¹³ As this letter had been publicly read in the refectory towards the beginning of Lent in 1671, Claude La Colombière would certainly know of it.

The father general, however, had a plan in mind, and reveals it on March 31, 1671. "An experience of many years has convinced me that the provinces of the Society are almost always better governed by a strange provincial than by a man of the region, and that often enough the provinces are in need of an outsider." There was no need of Father Oliva's adding, "I don't say this, however, of the Province of Lyons." And yet, shortly afterwards he appointed Father Etienne de Champs, a Parisian, as provincial of Lyons. He had been Claude's rector at the College of Clermont. On the same day, and by the same letter, Father de la Chaize was sent as superior to the College of the Trinity.

As far as religious observances went, these two appointments were a surprising success. For three years the letters of Father Oliva to the provincial, to the rectors and to the consultors of the province, never wearied of sounding the praises of Father de Champs and Father de la Chaize. "There is a complete transformation in the province."¹⁴ "You tell me wonders of Father Provincial," he wrote to the rector of the Trinity, "but I must equally congratulate you, because under your direction the first college of the province has made so much progress not only in spiritual but also in temporal matters."¹⁵ The *Annual Letters* of 1672 are still more explicit: "In the college, the religious life, discipline, and eagerness

¹³ To Father Suffren, January 13, 1671. Chocolate was at that time a luxury food. In 1693 Louis XIV suppressed it, for reasons of economy, at Versailles on reception days. It had got into France as a medicine. The first personage known to use it was the elder brother of Richelieu, the cardinal archbishop of Lyons.

¹⁴ To Father de Champs, February 7, 1673.

¹⁵ To Father de la Chaize, August 8, 1673. There are the same praises in many letters, January 9, February 20, April 3, May 8, 1674.

for virtue have been given such an impetus that our older men affirm without hesitation that they have never seen anything like it. There is peace everywhere, everywhere good order. Among all, despite the diversity of countries and nations, there is the most wonderful unity of hearts. Never were there more penances in the refectory, never more humility in coming to offer to do the lowliest work in the kitchen, not only on the part of the younger men, but even by the gravest professors of the higher classes. Hardly a day passes but some one or other goes to offer some service to the cook."

This fervor was not a mere flash in the pan. The letters of superiors bear witness to it.¹⁶ In some years there is nothing more with which to reproach the young religious than "a little over elegance in wearing a beard after the fashion of men of the court."¹⁷

Such results cannot be obtained by mere orders, or the application of sanctions, but by the contact of soul with soul, and personal influence. To get to the heart of it, it would be necessary to have been present at the conferences which followed the accounts of conscience. The strongest support of superiors, when they have to bring about these reforms, are surely those chosen souls who determine, as did Claude on this occasion, to follow the inspirations of grace without any holding back.

In speaking thus we are not simply formulating an hypothesis. In a letter of the period, La Colombière affirms the good effects which, by a kind of reaction, bad example might produce in a fervent soul. It seems to supply the explanation of the spiritual ascent to which God had just summoned him. Writing to his sister Marguerite who, in the month of May, 1674, had taken the habit at the Visitation of Condrieu, he congratulated her "on entering a house where so much virtue and such perfect charity reigned." And then, suddenly, urged by the mere contrast with what he himself had experienced, he adds:

¹⁶ Among others, there are many letters from Father Oliva, August 18, 1676, to Father Suffren, rector of the Trinity; to Fathers Arnoux, Cornu, and Court, consultants of the province.

¹⁷ Letter of Father Oliva to Father Boyer, provincial, August 25, 1676.

I know that when there might be less of it, it cannot harm a fervent person who is seeking only God. Besides the fact that one doesn't think of the faults of others, when one is engaged in correcting one's own, everything serves him who has a good intention, and the bad example which corrupts the weak arouses those who have some love of our Savior, by the desire they have of making reparation for what He suffers from the negligent, and from their fear of becoming like them. Let your sisters live as they like; that is none of your business. What a horrible temptation it is to encumber oneself with the behavior of others! ¹⁸

"The desire of reparation," let us mark the word well. It is important for the future confidant of the revelations of the Sacred Heart.

But there is more. To make sure that the spiritual reform of La Colombière dates from the years when he was surrounded by a touch of spiritual tepidity, we have his own testimony. When at the end of 1674 he made the vow of observing all his rules without exception, he expressly declared that this plan of life he had meditated, with the approval of his director, "for three or four years." ¹⁹ It is precisely the period in which Father Oliva issued his repeated admonitions.

Should we be forbidden to note in the same way that the reformation seen especially in the soul of La Colombière during the rectorship of Father de la Chaize, exactly coincides with the years when St. Margaret Mary, having entered the Visitation in 1671, began to offer herself as a victim for the infidelities of religious souls? The mystical body of Christ is a living reality, whose members, even though they are not aware of it, have spiritual relations which are very fruitful. Why should not Claude at Lyons have benefited from the graces of reparation merited at Paray-le-Monial by the holy Visitandine?

Whatever we may say about these mysteries of grace which escape our eyes of flesh, St. Ignatius would not have wished better dispositions in his son for a profitable beginning of the exercises of that school of the heart which is the third year of probation.

¹⁸ *Oeuvres*, VI, 245, 246.

¹⁹ *Grande Retraite*, §10. See further, Chapter 10.

The Tertianship, 1674-1675

AT first sight one might be surprised that religious, trained for a long time by the trials of the novitiate and arriving at the priesthood after solid studies of philosophy and theology, matured as was La Colombière by eight years of teaching, already exercised in preaching and the ministry of souls, should once more before their solemn vows be made to undergo in solitude a second novitiate in order to perfect themselves in Christian virtue and prayer.

This however is what St. Ignatius wished for his sons. And as a remembrance of the two years of novitiate with which their training began, this period which brings it to an end bears the name of third year, or tertianship.

The long period devoted to study and teaching could, in certain instances, bring about a lessening of that burst of initial fervor, or fill the mind and the heart with natural aspirations which grace has not sufficiently purified. Some experiments have been made in apostolic activity, and in the interior life, which have revealed certain aptitudes and certain defects. Certain calls of grace have been heard, certain orientations have taken shape. All of this, if it is to become exact, definite, elaborated, taken up again without fear of error, will find an infinite advantage from a period of quiet in an atmosphere of prayer. This period when the religious, the priest, having arrived at maturity, recollects himself in the society of his brethren, has proved from long experience to be very fruitful. And all the more so, that the spiritual director for this phase of intense spiritual activity is in the same sense a master of instruction, and for this reason is called "Instructor." Under his guidance one gets to the bottom of the principles of perfection, of Christian asceticism and mysticism. The third year is thus in every respect a school of higher training, of holiness, or to put it better, a prolonged meeting

of the whole man with Jesus Christ. As one of the first Jesuits wrote, one who in these matters has commented on the thought of the founder, "It would be strange indeed for us to spend so many years of labor in studying the nature of space, of time, of quantity, and think that we can understand the hidden essence of perfection by hurrying through a few spiritual books. . . . Nor is he a spiritual man who reads a large number of spiritual books and gives a good account of them, but rather, he who under the guidance of light from heaven has reduced the sound knowledge he has of spiritual things to practical use, first in his own life and then in the lives of others."¹

Nothing could be better than these lines from Father Antoine Le Gaudier to make us see the task which the Holy Spirit was going to bring to perfection in the soul of Claude during these months of grace.

O Beata Solitudo, O Sola Beatitudo! Claude was not going to the desert to seek this blessed solitude, nor to a great distance, but merely to the extreme southern section of the city of Lyons, close to the river bank where at that time the Saône and the Rhone joined their currents at the foot of the Abbey of Ainay. This whole quarter, so noisy today with the streets cut through and hurrying to the Gare de Perrache, was then all but an island,—it was even sometimes called "l'île d'Ainay,"—completely surrounded by silence. Isolated by the two rivers on the one hand, it was protected against the uproar coming down from the city hall and from Saint-Nizier by a thick screen of religious houses and shaded convents, full of muffled footsteps and the slow chanting of psalms. First there was, on the edge of Bellecour, the Priory of the Benedictine sisters of Blie, on the spot where today the rue Victor Hugo begins; then came the extensive Charity Hospital. Slightly to the south were the Sisters of St. Elizabeth of the Third Order of St. Francis of Assisi, the two houses of the Penitent Daughters and of the "*Recluses par force*," surrounding the chapel which in 1688 was replaced by the Church of St. Francis de Sales. Further on, between the streets which even then were called Sala and Sainte-Hélène, was the Vis-

¹ Le Gaudier, *Introductio ad solidam perfectionem*, Chap. 2.

itation of St. Mary, comprising the convent and boarding-school. On the edge of the peninsula, at the banks of the Saône, south of the Church of St. Michael, were the nuns of St. Claire, and along the Rhone, the Hermitage of St. Helen, which before long was handed over to the Penitents of St. Charles. Screened away behind so many cloisters and groves, as majestic as a queen, revered as a mother whose charity for centuries was lavished on miseries of all kinds, the Cluniac Abbey of Ainay, half-encircled by the confluence of the rivers, became visible in a "riverside setting which for a long time was one of the most beautiful, not only in France, but in all of Europe."

It was there, on a piece of property called "Plat d'Ainay," adjoining the Abbey and formerly belonging to it, that in 1605 the Jesuits set up a novitiate. This house which was dedicated to St. Joseph was the second in France, so it is said, to bear the name of the glorious patriarch. A church was built there which faced the street running from Bellecour and likewise called St. Joseph (today the *rue Auguste-Comte*), and which came to an end just at the entrance to the church. It was enlarged at two different times, in 1615 and in 1637, and the property in the time of Father La Colombière was limited on the north by the *rue Sainte-Hélène*, where the principal entrance was, on the south by the city walls (today, *rue des Remparts-d'Ainay*), on the east by the *rue de la Charité*, and on the west by the wall which separated it from the magnificent gardens of the Abbey, along the present *rue d'Auvergne*. The whole together made up a little more than five acres. It was an ideal solitude, only a few steps removed from the humming activity of the city, and which was troubled only at brief intervals by the austere or joyous ringing of bells inviting worshippers to the services. It was more soothing, and not less devout, than the solitude of the quietest corners of Paray-le-Monial of our days.

After having sheltered the novices at different times, St. Joseph's served as the tertianship for the Province of Lyons—not however continuously. For to avoid wounding the susceptibilities of the "Séquanais," that is to say the Francs-Comtois, who, even after the victorious campaign of Condé in 1668, did not as yet belong to

the kingdom of France, the second probation was sometimes made at Vesoul. So the result was a heavy burden for the little college of this town which, despite the help tendered by the novitiate of Salins, which was more generously endowed, was the source of many complaints. But in return, as Father Oliva wrote to the Rector of Vesoul: "If the tertian fathers have added to your burden, they ought to lessen it noticeably by taking on themselves the service of the neighbor and by preaching missions in the neighborhood." Some months later, answering Father Gilbert Athiaud, rector of St. Joseph's—who still feared that he did not possess all the qualities necessary to instruct the tertians, the father general wrote: "Your Reverence is perfectly capable of facing up to several ministries at one and the same time. In this house of probation your occupations are not so numerous as to prevent you from forming the fathers of the third year to a life of devotion. I am very happy to see you so prompt in obeying, and so ready to return to Vesoul when that will be necessary, to carry on the same duties."

The following year, Father Athiaud, who had never left Lyons, received eleven tertians whom Providence sent to him at St. Joseph's. Having governed the college of Avignon for four years, he had long since made the acquaintance of Claude La Colombière. He was a religious of sturdy abnegation and uncommon humility. The annals of the house later bore this witness, that he shone "by the virtues of prudence, uprightness, and justice to an eminent degree. In the course of his tertianship he had bound himself by oath"—it is not said that this was done by vow—"cheerfully to accept any appointment, even the most humble, which would be given him by superiors." Humble appointments. . . . Father Athiaud became successively rector of seven houses, twice vice-provincial, once provincial, everywhere being the servant of the servants of God. Father Athiaud was going to meet with a project in the heart of his disciple which involved an obligation that was a good deal stricter and vaster in extent.

After a few weeks' wait to allow the soul to become quiet under the haze of autumn, and away from the din of the world, the Spirit-

ual Exercises of thirty days began, thirty days of uninterrupted silence, the purpose of which was to set in motion the work of the third year.

Determined "to be extremely faithful and sincere, and to vanquish on this point the pride which finds self-revelation so repugnant," Claude forced himself to keep his spiritual journal from the beginning. He found in it a twofold advantage; first, to aid his Instructor in directing him, and then to preserve for the future the remembrance of the lights he received and the resolutions he took. Precious pages, which will permit us to penetrate to the very interior of his soul.

Although he felt a "great passion" for certain books "which dealt with the spiritual life on a higher plane, such as the works of St. Teresa, the *Chrétien intérieur* [of M. de Bernières], etc.," the retreatant decided not to read any of them, under the persuasion "that God would see to it that he will find all he needs in the points which the spiritual father would give him and in the books which he would suggest." Mystical ways and lofty perfection are not synonomous terms. There are many ways by which to arrive at holiness.

What were these points given him by the spiritual father? Evidently, those of the Exercises of St. Ignatius, and ordinarily those to be found in Le Gaudier's commentary. This Jesuit was for a long time Instructor of tertians, and at his death in 1622 he left a treatise, *De perfectione vite spiritualis*, which was printed twenty years later. The last volume, under the title, *Introductio ad solidam perfectionem*, explained all that was required in the way of occupation for the third probation, and a whole series of directions or meditations for the retreat of thirty days. From the very tenor of Claude's notes it is easy to see that Father Athiaud was very closely inspired by this work. The dependence is striking during the Second Week, and this is the most detailed among La Colombière's notes. We there find all the subjects treated by Le Gaudier, those which are personal to him, as well as others, and in the order in which they are proposed, even when this order is not exactly that of St. Ignatius.

Moreover no other subject is to be found there.² But it is only too clear that this purely material dependence is limited to the choice and the order of the subject-matter of prayer. In Claude's *Journal*, the intellectual element that is properly discursive is reduced to a minimum. What caught the attention and held the pen of the retreatant is the affective aspect and the resolutions. In this respect everything is spontaneous, too markedly so for one to detect any other influence beyond that of divine grace.

Another practice was inspired by Father Le Gaudier. Frequently during the retreat, Claude inserts between the usual meditations, an examen on his observance of the rules of his institute, an examen which, as a rule, has no connection with the concurrent reflections of the retreat. We are not surprised when we read in the order of the day prescribed for the retreatants by the *Introductio*: "Afternoon, from two to three, consideration on the Rules; first, those of the Summary, then the Common Rules, then those of Priests, and those for various offices."³ The examens made by Claude are an indication of the fidelity with which he followed the directions of his Instructor.

After having studied the spiritual journal in detail and taken note of the movements of the soul which it reveals, we give it a fresh, hurried reading to grasp it as a united whole. It is then that we can without difficulty appreciate the fact that from beginning to end it is a drama, always stirring, sometimes tragic. "I sense two men in me. . . ." There is a struggle between confidence in God, in which the religious is firmly established, and the fear he experiences,

² In the last part of the Second Week, for example, Father Le Gaudier recommends on his own account eight meditations in the following order: Zeal for Souls, Evangelical Poverty, Mortification of the Flesh, Contempt of the World, Humility, Diffidence in Self and Confidence in God, the Prayer Recommended by Christ, Conformity with God's Will (*op. cit.*, edition of 1858, pp. 347 to 368). If we consult the *Journal* of Father La Colombière, we shall find these eight meditations, and in the same order. This dependence, not of course of the intimate thought of Father La Colombière, but of the choice of subject-matter proposed by Father Athiaud, has been pointed out in a note in the *Revue d'Ascétique et de Mystique*, 1925, pp. 48-51.

³ *Op. cit.* c. xxii, p. 207.

amounting at times to anguish, of not being able in his future apostolate to overcome his attachment for the good opinion of men.

Claude had inherited magnificent talents which placed him in the limelight. He was the only one of his Lyons brethren who went to Paris for theology. Even before his priesthood he met with unusual success as preacher during his teaching years at Avignon, and as a classical scholar in the literary drawing rooms of fashionable society. He lived in the entourage of a prime minister who had a high esteem for him. An Academician honored him with his friendship and at times consulted him. A charm, made up of refinement and gentleness, breathed from his person and his bearing. He was a man with connections. He had an appeal, and he knew it. He was born for friendship. Extremely impressionable, gifted with an appreciation of music and the arts, he would gladly have instinctively enjoyed the pleasures they offered, and he admits that "he was naturally inclined to the love of pleasure."⁴ [21] But what would have especially held him captive, had he yielded to his deepest inclinations, was praise, the interest in his reputation, applause, that which he called his "desire of vainglory." This was his "predominant passion." [38]

Now, the slightest attachment to the least of these pleasures, the moment it is freely accepted, becomes a theft of the total gift which God asks and to which the religious has fully consented. Even sparingly to take anything back of the offering he had made, filled him with horror, and even to risk doing so made him shudder. Hence the drama which unfolds during the course of the retreat, a drama which, like a classical tragedy, is altogether interior.

From the beginning this man had made the resolution before God to be "extremely sincere," and he realizes that he has a veritable "envy of those whom blindness, or some other habitual incapacity, withdraws from all commerce with the world." For them every occasion of vainglory is suppressed at a single stroke. "Obligated to live as though they were dead," they are established in a greater

⁴ In this whole analysis as in the chapters that follow the numbers in square brackets refer to the paragraphs in the edition, *Maîtres spirituels*.

repose and detachment which frees them from the necessity of perpetual combat. "In the ardent desire which God gives me of never loving anything but Him . . . perpetual imprisonment, or a calumny, would bring me I think an incomparable fortune, and I do not think that with the help of heaven I would ever grow tired of it." [3]

Such a desire, indeed, would not be surprising in a Carthusian, but it is astonishing in a religious who is vowed by his vocation to the salvation of souls. The retreatant was aware of this, and this idea awakened another conflict in his soul. He felt less zeal than formerly "to work for the salvation of the neighbor." And that was because "of the sole fear" that in these assignments "he would be seeking self." "For it seems to me that there are none where nature does not find her due, especially when one succeeds, as one should wish to do for God's glory. There is need of a great grace and great strength to resist the charm there is in transforming hearts, and in the confidence they whom your words have touched have in you." [4]

One might think, indeed, that this priest has so little experience that he is ignorant of the solution given at all times for a case of conscience like this! If this fear of robbing God of His glory should make a layman tremble, or a newcomer to the apostolate, as happened two centuries later with Léon Harmel, that should not be surprising.⁵ But a religious whose obligations are now of fifteen years standing? Has he not read in the rules for scruples of his Father Ignatius, St. Bernard's reply to the demon: "It was not for you that I began, and it is not for you that I will stop?" Without falling into the weaknesses denounced in the *Provincial Letters*, could he not very legitimately appeal to the expedient of a right intention? Every time that Claude was obliged to act, we cannot doubt that he rectified his intention. He will begin all over again in the future. But in those days of solitude, far from the world's happenings, he tries to fathom his heart, fearing that he is deceiving himself. Cost what it may, he will not risk rapine in the holocaust.

Doubtless, this conflict was quieted by an act of confidence. [6]

⁵ See our *Léon Harmel*, especially I, 77; II, 327 ff.

But before long, it returns, summoning the same desires, "the grave, prison with every possible discomfort," and the same fears of rugged conflicts. [8]

On the seventh day he has reached his limit in a whirlwind of distrust. The more "austere, lonely, obscure, remote from all associations a life would be, the more easy it seemed," because it would be "easy to live it holily." "Imprisonment, continuous sickness, death itself," all that is nothing "compared with this eternal war that one must carry on against oneself, with this living death in the midst of the world. When I think of that I feel that life seems fearfully long. . . ." [16] Peace returned however following on some reflections which are dear to spiritual men, notably St. Francis de Sales. "To know whether we have displeased God in the enjoyment of a great reputation . . . we must not judge by feeling." As well pretend "not to feel the fire" when it is laid against the flesh.

"But I must examine, first, whether I have sought the pleasure which I taste; secondly, whether I have any trouble in giving it up; thirdly, whether, the glory of God being equal, I would choose rather things that are disagreeable and obscure. . . . When I am in this disposition, I must labor with great liberty and great courage at God's work, and despise all doubts and scruples. . . ." [18]

"I must." It is the law, clear, easy to promulgate, but which, even when sincerely accepted, is not enough to extinguish these doubts and scruples at one stroke.

During the day of repose allowed the retreatants after the First Week, some weakness of self-love cropped up. Deep was his humiliation. But without delay, Claude understood that God had permitted this fault "to cure him of a vain self-esteem which he had begun to entertain." He suddenly makes the discovery "that he was not all that he thought he was," and he experiences "a peace and a joy" that were so sensible that no truth had ever given him "so much satisfaction." [19]

In the course of the Second Week, during which St. Ignatius invites his retreatants to contemplate events in the life of Christ, Claude finds a very sweet joy in seeking out examples of self-abasement, of humiliation, of detachment, of an obscure and hidden

life, of obedience; not a difficult task in the Incarnation, The Nativity, The Flight into Egypt, Nazareth, the Baptism. . . . What especially captivated him in these mysteries was "the interior of Jesus which so highly enhanced the lowliness of His actions. There is to be found the "true way of holiness. In the way of life that I have chosen this is the only means of distinguishing myself before God, because all that is outward is common." [28] He also very carefully noted that Jesus chose for apostles "poor, unlettered men," to have us understand that "natural talents are not the cause of the success" which they achieve. [35]

And yet, towards the end of the Second Week, even before he pronounced the heroic vow, of which we shall speak later, a fresh attack occurred, at two different times, which came close to shaking his confidence in God.

The propensity in my heart to vainglory is still as strong as ever . . . although with God's grace I repress its movements. I feel that I have never known myself so well; but I see myself so miserable that I am ashamed and the sight produces from time to time attacks of sadness which would bring me to despair if God did not support me. [36]

And further on:

God has made me see myself . . . so deformed, so wretched, so stripped of all merit, of all virtue, that I have never been so dissatisfied with myself. I feel that I heard Him in the depths of my heart, going over all the virtues and making me see clearly that I did not have one of them. I pray very earnestly to keep this light always. [50]

But, violent as was the shock, it settled down to a quiet peace. "I am ready, if God so wishes it, to pass the rest of my life in this tiresome struggle. . . . I think, however, that this appetite for vainglory can be stifled by dint of checking its impulses." [36]

This conviction will naturally entail, and reinforce, definite resolutions on the hidden life. In this there are mingled, doubtless, recollections of the College of Clermont and worldly practices rather dear to Bouhours and Rapin: "No special familiarity with any secular . . . unless it be very plain that the interests of God's glory require that I act otherwise." [27] Fidelity to common life, to "all

ordinary things in all the circumstances required by the rules. . . . Everything else is frequently only the effect of vanity which seeks to make itself seen." [34] "Omit no humiliation which I can obtain without violating the Rule." And that without sadness, for it is "only through friendship" that God asks these renouncements from us. "We do with pleasure what we think will be agreeable to one whom we sincerely love." [38] "For contempt of the world, the practice of the presence of God is very helpful. A man who has a king and a lackey for witness, doesn't think much of the lackey." [48]

Meditation on the Passion during the Third Week strengthened these dispositions in the retreatant. Beholding Christ dragged before the tribunals, "silent under accusation," he thought that he would willingly "with God's grace submit to calumny, and to being treated like a criminal," and that, because he "found therein the complete abasement of his self-love," his outstanding enemy. But very soon he recovers himself. This glimpse which God had given him in anticipation of the trials that awaited him in England, seemed to him to be the "most fanciful of desires." "It is a loss of time to think about them; I do not think that such a favor is for me." Was not busying himself with such thoughts taking the chance of "running after the vainglory of the world?" For him God's call lies elsewhere, and it is very clear: "Try to profit from the little occasions that present themselves." [58] Face to face with Jesus "treated as a fool by Herod," this cry leaps from his lips, the end of an emotion long entertained: "Dear God, I wish to make myself holy just between You and me." [59]

The divine light multiplied its assaults. "A crown of thorns was placed on the head of Christ: it is thus Christ expiates the horrible desire everywhere to play the king, to excel others, to be superior to others in everything." [61] He has the same thoughts when the rabble prefers Barabbas to Jesus. "If every time we broke a rule out of human respect, we reflected that we preferred a man to God, I do not think that we would do it so often." [62] Finally, when he accompanied the body of Jesus to the sepulchre, "We should live as though we were already dead and buried. . . . A man who is not thought of any more, who is nothing any more in the world, who

is worthless—this is the condition in which I must be for the future, as far as possible, and this is what I wholly desire to be in fact.” [65]

There is a still more remarkable proof of this divine attraction. Even the glorious mysteries of the Fourth Week ended for the retreatant with these resolutions of unreserved renouncement. After having contemplated Jesus on the mount of the Ascension, “completely detaching Himself from the world and gently rising from the earth to heaven,” he adds: “What prevents us from following Him is that we are living a wholly natural life, or are buried in sin, or tied up in the commerce of the world. . . . For me, I ask of God to live between heaven and earth, without enjoying the pleasures of earth or those of heaven, but in a universal detachment, being bound only to Him Whom we find everywhere.” [70] A few days later the long retreat came to an end with this attractive motto, at once an act of love and a watchword: “God must be satisfied, whatever the cost.” [76]

The retreat ended, but the divine movements of grace continued, always inclining him in the same direction. To overcome at once “the temptation to vainglory,” he made the resolution of sincerely and entirely renouncing that which provoked them, by a way that was extremely efficacious and infallible. “The resolution was fully formed in my mind, and as far as it depended on me, I would with God’s grace have put it into execution on the morrow, had I not been informed that I ought not to rely upon myself.” [76] What was this resolution? A biographer has suggested, to live as a coadjutor brother.⁶ But such a purpose on the part of a religious already ordained, does not seem at all probable. It could not have been a sincere resolution. On the contrary, when we reflect on what La Colombière wrote later, during his retreat in London, in January, 1677, “Had I been free, I have no doubt that I would have passed the rest of my days in solitude,” we are invincibly led to believe that, making use of a right recognized at this time by the Jesuit Institute, Claude had conceived the plan of becoming a Carthusian.

At any rate, it does not seem that this “sincere resolution” had

⁶ P. Charrier, in his edition of the *Complete Works*, VI, p. 66, note 1.

anything to do with a departure for the foreign missions. On the feast of St. Francis Xavier, shortly after the long retreat, it is worth noting that in seven or eight pages of spiritual notes, summing up the meditations he made on the great apostle, there is no sign of a desire of this kind. Doubtless, he was ready, if it were God's will, "to carry the light of the gospel to abandoned peoples." But what he seeks in Xavier is a model whom he can imitate from now on in the ordinary life of every day. What he meditates on is his zeal to bring men to God, by his day to day conversations with seculars or with his brethren, by his example and the practice of all the virtues, by his prayers and austerities. What he admires is "an obedience that is prompt, joyous, and which submits the judgment. It is a "miracle of humility." It is his sweetness, his perfect kindness, his patience in the face of the "contempt and insults of the bonzes." It is also the reflection of the greatness of God Who is glorified in His saints. [87-97]

In the files containing the letters of the father general to the Jesuits of Lyons between the years 1658 and 1680, we frequently come upon answers to religious who had asked for the missions in Canada, the Indies, or Japan. But Father Claude does not appear among them. That was not his vocation. What was exceptional, striking in outward actions, which fell under the eyes of men, did have attractions for him. It is for that reason that he deliberately renounced them. He reserved for himself the exceptional and the striking in the inward fervor of soul which only God beholds.

Thus, the pitiless knowledge which the Holy Spirit gives La Colombière of his inclination to vainglory leads to this first conclusion and the determination zestfully to flee the applause of the world and seek the obscurity of a hidden life. This rather painful knowledge had a second result, still more important: it will furnish a support for his theology of confidence.

The truth is, he admits that momentarily the conviction of his miseries "which grows in him from day to day, weakens considerably, or at least lessens, a certain firm confidence which he has had for a long time in God's mercy." He goes so far as to write: "I do

not dare lift my eyes to heaven any more. I behold myself so unworthy of His graces that I am not sure but I have shut the door to them." [50]

This was a temporary stage permitted by God, because it is very profitable for one's sanctification. It is a conviction that purifies the soul, maintaining it in the complete mistrust of self and giving it the certainty, ever more and more lively, that "without Me you can do nothing." It is a stage even more necessary in the training of an apostle. It convinces him beyond all doubt that he is impotent to touch the heart of a sinner. "What folly it is to think that a few passing words can do that which has cost Jesus Christ so dearly! You speak, and a soul is converted. It is like a puppet show, the servant bids the doll to dance, and the master starts it moving by means of a spring. The command accomplishes nothing at all." [51] It is a necessary stage, finally, to give the apostle the bitter experience of the despair which frequently takes possession of the sinner at the moment that God is calling him to conversion. La Colombière is to recall this later.

But very soon Claude will surmount this stage, and that for good. In the First Week of his retreat, thinking of the sins which might trouble his conscience at the moment of death, he halted with this decision: "I will make something of a lump of all the sins which will be present to my mind, and I will cast it at the feet of our Savior there to be consumed by the fire of His mercy. The greater their number, the more enormous they appear to me, the more willingly will I offer them to be consumed, because that which I shall ask of Him will be all the more worthy of Him." [9]

And now the more he advances in these meditations, the more he is penetrated with this assurance—familiar to him for some time now—that the deeper his misery, the more matter it will supply for the exercise of the divine mercy, the more God "will be glorified in forgiving me." [6]

Thus, strange as this may seem at first sight, it is the interior consciousness of his faults that constitutes for him the beginning, the first support for his confidence in God. And that for this profound reason, which a Jansenist would have found very difficult to

conceive, this confidence shown in God, despite the conviction of our unworthiness, gives greater honor to the divine mercy than a pharasaical confidence shown by one who has no consciousness of his guilt. Only the first is the daughter of humility; the other is pride.

When, in the light of repeated experiences, this conviction becomes for La Colombière a kind of second nature, the sight of his infirmities becomes clearer and clearer and will never succeed in troubling him. Quite the contrary. "I have observed that every time God gives me this lively conviction of my miseries, and I have begun to pray, after some fault or weakness which gav^e me a clearer knowledge of myself and my imperfections, I have been consoled towards the end of my prayer, and left it very much stronger." [64] Henceforth his miseries and weaknesses will in vain appear to him greater every day. He has the key to the problem firmly in hand, which was pointed out to him by St. Paul long before: "When I know myself to be weak, then I am strong." Emptied of self, he will count only on God's grace. Claude had so written at the end of the First Week: "I will say Mass daily: this is my only resource. Jesus Christ could do precious little if He could not sustain me from one day to another." [13] Likewise, at the end of the retreat: "God must do all. So much the better. I must not fear that He will ever fail in anything. All we have to do is to recognize our impotence. . . ." [77]

Thus, the sense of his miseries is for La Colombière the condition indeed of his confidence, but it is not the foundation. This foundation is God's grace, actual grace at every moment, but especially sanctifying grace, the presence of God within us, our participation in the very life of God which makes of us His sons. The nearer he draws to his end, the more we shall see Claude become conscious of this divine indwelling. But from the time of his tertianship, with what sweetness does he allow himself to become imbued in the joy it brings him! And if, in this spirit, he chooses one of the great feasts of the Mother of God, our Mother, on which to make an act of complete abandonment to God in confidence, it is not without a premeditated purpose. "These helps will come to us," he writes,

"through the intercession of Mary, to whom God refuses nothing." [77]

On the feast of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin, I resolved so to abandon myself to God, who is always within me and in whom I am and live, that I am no longer anxious about my behavior, either inwardly or outwardly, but resting sweetly in His arms without fear of temptation or illusion or prosperity or adversity or my evil inclinations or even of my faults. It seems that one is indeed at one's ease in so safe and sweet a refuge, and that I should be afraid neither of men nor of demons nor of myself nor of life nor of death. [98]

Having thus worked out his reform, La Colombière had every assurance of never losing this rediscovered confidence, since the more he became conscious of his misery, the more motives he had to count on grace and to rely on God.

That is all his celebrated "Act of Confidence" means. It was the peroration of a sermon which he delivered shortly afterwards on this virtue. In calling attention to it here by anticipation, we believe that we are giving the most logical and the truest conclusion to the deepest movements which stirred his soul through the course of his tertianship. "Others," he said, "may look to their riches or their talents for their happiness; others may find support either in the innocence of their lives or the rigor of their penances, or the number of their alms, or the fervor of their prayers. 'But Thou, O Lord, hast singularly constituted me in hope.' For me, O Lord, all my confidence is my confidence itself. This confidence never deceived any one. 'No one, no one ever hoped in the Lord and was confounded!' " ⁷ We shall see that Claude not only inspired these principles in the souls he directed, but in adapting them to different situations in life, he frequently did nothing else than exploit his treasure.

To explain the intense alternations which mark the itinerary of the long retreat, some have thought good to have recourse to a physical depression. Because of overwork during his teaching and the preparation of his sermons, La Colombière was worn out when

⁷ *Oeuvres*, IV, 215 ff.

he reached the tertianship. Hence, this nostalgia he felt not only for solitude but for a kind of passivity. Hence, this distaste for the apostolate, which appears outwardly under the guise of a fear of vainglory and of a preference for life imprisonment. These symptoms would point to a condition of physical exhaustion. Others have sought an explanation of these passing pusillanimities in the atmosphere of rigorism which, as the effect of an impalpable Jansenist influence, made its way without their being aware of it, into the thought of the instructor and the tertians of the *Maison Saint-Joseph*.

Such judgments seem to us to be more ingenious* than justified. Apart from some headaches, mentioned in a letter to Father Bouhours some three years earlier, there is no breakdown noted in Claude's health at this period. The triennial catalogues of 1672 and 1675 even improve on earlier catalogues on this point, and, not satisfied with saying that his health is "good," say on two different occasions that it is "excellent."⁸ To blame the instruction of Father Athiaud for being excessively severe, would be to wrong him gratuitously. There is nothing in his long history as superior to make him disposed to such severity.⁹

Without denying that La Colombière was subject, like others, to the influence of the physical upon the moral, or to a certain mode of thought seeping into his mind unawares, yet the ebb and flow, which we have noted, not in the depths of his thought but rather in certain surface impressions, is explained quite satisfactorily, as far as all essentials go, by the psychological movements which so frequently agitate souls during a retreat. These movements are normal, and St. Ignatius has very carefully set down directions for their control and use in the double series of *Rules for the Discernment of Spirits*.

⁸ "Vires firmæ."

⁹ It would also be vain to attempt to explain this diffidence, which was quite temporary, of La Colombière for the apostolate by too prolonged reading of spiritual authors who offer an exaggerated criticism of the active life. Even in Lallemant do we not find pages which seem to offer an excessive depreciation of the active life? But the hypothesis of too prolonged an association with these authors is without foundation in the life of Blessed Claude.

Neither was it an instinct of rigorism, but a greater love, which inspired Claude with the heroic vow of which we have now to speak.

10

Vow of Unreserved Fidelity

ONE afternoon towards the end of the Second Week of his long retreat Claude read an account of the death of John Berchmans. "I was deeply touched by what this young man then said, that it gave him great consolation never to have broken a single rule" of his institute. "And," he suddenly thought, "what could I say on this point if I had to give an account to God?" "I felt so great a sorrow for having observed my rules so ill that I burst into tears. . . . All the rest of the day I felt a deep inward sorrow, having before my eyes the rules that I had so often set at naught and disregarded. Three or four times I wept, and it seems that with God's grace it will not be easy to make me break them again. But I did not cease to be inconsolable over the past. I had never understood how wrong I was in all that." [47]

What were the negligences that brought on these tears? We know that for three or four years—the interval in which he could observe a cooling in fervor all about him—Claude had taken up and entertained the idea of binding himself by vow to observe all his rules. [40] For some time even, he lived as he would be obliged to live if he took the vow. "It is rather," he notes, "from a desire to bind myself to persevere than a desire of doing something new and extraordinary that I have entertained this thought." [41]

In the Second Week, during the days when St. Ignatius invites the retreatant to draw up a plan for the reform of his life, the moment arrived for La Colombière to realize his purpose. But the

tertian could not undertake such an obligation without the approval of his Father Instructor. Under the heading, "Plan for a Vow," he draws up an account in some ten pages, in which he explains with some detail and with his usual concern for exactness the object of the vow, the way in which he understands it, the motives which impel him, and some considerations which serve as answers to objections which he anticipates.

To begin with, he writes, "I feel inclined to vow to God the observance of our Constitutions, of our Common Rules, of the Rules of Modesty, of the Rules for Priests, as follows." [41]

It is not, then, merely with reference to certain actions of the day that Claude wishes to promise a strict observance, but with reference to all, from the hour of rising, to that of retiring, and from the minute directions suggested for prayer which St. Ignatius calls "Additions," to spiritual reading and the evening examination of conscience. It includes not only his spiritual duties towards God, but the apostolate, and charity towards the neighbor, submission to superiors, penance and the mortification of the senses. The vow will bear not only on determined acts or special practices, but on the general tendencies towards perfection that have to do with humility, self-abnegation in all things, purity of intention, the renunciation of every natural affection.

Among the motives which urge him there is one, each term of which is to be weighed. It will make us wince for our cowardice. And if we did not keep in mind the very pure love which inspires him and the grace of God which will make all things possible, it might seem an inhuman presumption, mad folly. "To break all at once the chains of self-love and to cut off for good the hope of finding satisfaction on any occasion, a hope which I think will always be alive in whatever state of mortification I may possibly be." There is especially the love of expiation: "To repair past irregularities by the necessity under which I will hold myself to be exact for as long a time as it will please God to give me life. This motive impels me very much, and is much more urgent than all the others." There is also the love of gratitude for "the divine will which deserves to be obeyed under pain of eternal damnation, even though God in His infinite

goodness does not always oblige us under such grave penalties." Finally, there is the desire "to do all that is in my power to belong to God without reserve . . . to love Him with all my strength, at least with an effective love."

Looked at from without, this account with its many divisions and subdivisions, carefully numbered, might at first repel. A strange design, one might think, that of putting a state of soul into the form of a tabular analysis! But if one will agree to read slowly and from within, associating oneself with the thought of the man who is writing, keeping in mind the consequences that are to result for the whole of his life from the decision he takes, then an intense emotion takes hold of one, to such an extent that the further one goes on with the reading the more one realizes the serenity of him who condemns himself to death.

In fact, to anticipate possible objections, he calmly writes:

1. I do not find it harder to observe all that is included in this vow than a man who is naturally inclined to pleasure would have to do to safeguard his chastity, which obliges him to so many struggles and to so much vigilance.

2. God, Who has inspired St. Ignatius with our rules, intended them to be observed. Therefore, it is not impossible to do so, not even morally impossible. Now, the vow far from making the observance harder makes it easy, not only because it removes temptations by the fear of committing a grievous sin, but still more because it obliges God to give on occasion a more powerful assistance. . . .

4. I have no fear that this will rob me of peace of soul, or be a stumbling block to me: 'Much peace have they that love thy law; and to them there is no stumbling block' (Ps. 118:165)¹ . . . Consequently, the more one loves this law, the more peaceful he will be: 'And I walked at large, because I have sought after thy commandments' (Ps. 118:45).²

13. Far from frightening me, the thought of this obligation gives me joy. It seems that instead of making myself a slave, I am going to enter the kingdom of liberty and peace. Self-love will never dare to pester me, when there is so much danger in following its suggestions. I feel that

¹ "Pax multa diligentibus legem tuam, et non est illis scandalum" (Ps. 118:165).

² Ambulabo in latitudine, quia mandata tua exquisivi" (Ps. 118:45).

I have hit upon my happiness, and that I have at last found the treasure for which I should give up everything.

On reading this Father Athiaud must have felt a strange thrill. But the simple fact that he allowed his tertian to go ahead shows the high regard he had for him. And for us this is a proof of the degree of the love of God to which Claude had by that time attained.

"Under pain of eternal damnation," "fear of committing a grievous sin," it is clear from these words that Claude wished to bind himself under pain of grievous sin, and that he would have wished to set up the barrier of mortal sin between his will and the violation of his rule.³ But since mortal sin involves the sanction of eternal damnation, it belongs to God alone, and to the Church, the depositary of the divine powers, to fix its limits. A Christian could well bind himself to have the same horror for certain infidelities which of their nature are venial, that he would have for mortal sin, so that he would avoid them as he would avoid a crime. But he cannot make mortal a fault that by its nature is venial, unless God who is the sole master of His sanctions, gives His express approval.⁴

As was his duty, the Father Instructor must have offered these observations to La Colombière and have limited his obligations to what a sound theology permits. The retreat notes tell us of the "proposed vow." We know from many other later testimonies that

³ The illustrious martyr of New France, Jean de Brébeuf, had wished to do likewise in 1645: "Henceforth, at the moment of communion, I will make daily, with the consent of my superior, the vow of doing that which I recognize to be for the greater glory of God and His greater service. . . . In things which are only of counsel, but which are important and of serious consequences for the glory of God, this vow will bind me under pain of mortal sin. If the thing is of little importance, I bind myself only under venial sin" (Martin, *Vie du P. de Brébeuf*, p. 263).

⁴ Some authors, however, are of a contrary opinion. Hugueny, for example, writes in an important article on *Imperfection*: "If by the vow of the more perfect, we bind ourselves to do that which will be more perfect for us, this vow changes nothing in the programme of good actions which we have to do. Only, it obliges us strictly under pain of mortal sin, not to neglect important works of counsel, to which, apart from the vow, we were not bound, except under pain of venial sin, *aliqua*liter (*Dictionnaire de théologie catholique*, VII, 1927).

the vow was taken,⁵ but we do not have the definite and exact wording.

Even with this restriction, however, some are surprised. Had he the right to impose on himself, even under pain of venial sin, practices of virtue which are only of counsel? What is more, such a vow, bearing on so many points, will narrow the soul and rob it of all spontaneity of movement. It is the "faithful and prudent" servant that is praised in the Gospel. Did not the good servant Claude fail in prudence by imposing on himself such an overmeasure of fidelity? These are two questions which we can hardly evade. Their answer will at one and the same time help us better to understand Claude's purpose.

To one who asks whether any one of the faithful could *on his own authority* assume a strict obligation to practices of mere counsel, that is to say, make of them practices which, if omitted, would constitute for him an act of formal disobedience, the answer would in general be no. The founders of orders have not wished that the rules of their institutes—except for the essential object of the three vows of religion—should bind under pain of even venial sin. Without authorization a religious could not licitly contract such an obligation. And without serious reasons, carefully weighed, it would be rash on the part of the superior to allow it. We have just now seen the reasons which inspired Father La Colombière. It remains to see, when these reasons exist, under what conditions a vow of this kind would be both licit and valid.

There are two especially: 1) that the object of the vow be sufficiently important, and 2) that it can be held to certain limits. First, a sufficiently important matter: the obligation itself which is imposed should be proportioned to the importance of the object. Ordinarily one could not take a vow to make the sign of the cross under pain of mortal sin. But how could you forbid a person to do so in time of persecution, when the omission of this act might

⁵ Among others, Father de la Pesse declares: "His director had no trouble in allowing him to take this vow. The servant of God vowed, therefore, all that had been contained in his project" *Préface* to the Sermons, *Oeuvres*, I, p. xxi.

risk being interpreted as apostasy? The matter should be limited, and therefore determined. What validity could be ascribed to a vow to practice humility in general and without any further delimitation?

Now, among the rules of every religious order there are some that prescribe virtuous tendencies rather than specified acts, the importance of which is supreme, but which are not very precise. On the other hand, there are others which command precise and limited acts, but which, taken by themselves and in their relation to perfection, do not have an equal importance.

To the first class belong the rules, which even outside the three substantial vows, indicate for the religious the ideal of life which should distinguish him from the ordinary Christian, such as for the contemplative the rules which prescribe prayer or the office in choir; and for the apostle, zeal, the teaching of catechism, preaching; and for all, those rules which prescribe a general tendency to humility, abnegation, and penance. It is evidently a grave matter for a religious of set purpose to renounce this ideal. It only remains for him, if he desires to make it the matter of a vow, to determine the circumstances under which he binds himself, the exact limits which he forbids himself to pass. Not, surely that he wishes to reserve to himself the right, like the celebrated character of a medieval farce, to object with insolence, "that is not in my part"; but in order to be armed in advance both against a cowardly will, and the scruples of conscience. It is precisely to these determinations that we see La Colombière apply himself in the proposed vow.

The following is a rule in the *Summary of the Constitutions* of the Society, the twelfth, which prescribes that the Jesuit "seek God by means of his greater abnegation, and as far as he can, his continual mortification in all things." How can a man bind himself by vow to such an observance without making it more specific? Claude does it as follows:

Regarding greater self-abnegation and continual mortification, I think that with the grace of our Lord I can vow: 1st, to have no efficacious will regarding life or death, health, prosperity, adversity, employment,

place, except in so far as this will may be conformed to His; 2nd, to desire as much as I can whatever will be contrary to my natural inclinations, if this is not opposed to His greater glory, and I think that in His infinite goodness He has placed me almost in this disposition; 3rd, never to seek what flatters the senses,—shows, concerts, perfumes, things pleasant to taste; nor what could offer some gratification to vanity. Not to seek it, I mean, either in my words or my actions; and as for furniture and clothing, to be satisfied with what I shall be given, unless obedience or the rule of health obliges me to act otherwise: 4th, not to avoid any of those mortifications which present themselves, unless I judge before God that I ought to act otherwise for some reason that seems sound to me; 5th, never to take any pleasure in those things which of necessity I must use, such as drinking, eating, sleeping, nor in those which one cannot avoid in the Society without affectation or singularity, such as recreations, extraordinary dishes, etc., and never to take them for the pleasure nature finds in them, but to renounce that in my heart, and in fact to mortify myself to the extent that God inspires me, and as far as I can without calling attention to myself [A 7°].

We might insist that even after this effort at precision some of these rules might seem to us too undetermined to be kept within limits, and consequently to form the matter of a vow.

Yes, they do seem so to us; not sufficiently limited for us who do not have the special lights the saints enjoy. But for a soul that is delicate and supernaturally enlightened, as was that of Blessed Claude, that which seems to us to have flowing outlines could be very precise and even certainly was so. It doubtless would be rash to allow an ordinary religious to vow, as did La Colombière, “never to seek what flatters the senses . . . never to avoid any mortification of those which present themselves . . . never to take any pleasure in those which I must use.” But for a religious who has received from the Holy Spirit the gifts of counsel, wisdom and the fear of God in the same degree as Claude, and who has already lived for a number of years in these dispositions, the vagueness disappears.

One proof that Claude saw very clearly to what he had obliged himself is that he declares at different times that he has found in the obligation he has undertaken, and which seems so vague to

us, a great facility and source of peace. He vows, for example, "not to love his relatives except in Jesus Christ." To many this might appear vague enough, but not to him, since he adds: "I think that by God's grace I am already in this disposition, and so this point can cause me no uneasiness" [A 4°]. Again, he takes the vow "to desire to be insulted, overwhelmed with calumnies and abuse." For him this is something that can be limited, since he declares: "I think that for this all I have to do is to ask God to preserve the sentiments which in His infinite mercy He has already given me" [A 6°]. He also obliges himself "neither to do nor omit anything, out of human respect." That could well involve the soul in many a scruple. And yet, as he saw it, it was very easy to keep within limits: "This last point appeals to me very much, and I think that it will establish me in a great inward peace" [A 8°].

Along with these rules which state the essential precepts of perfection, there are others which simply prescribe, as do certain rubrics of the Mass, attitudes, formulas of prayer, or still less, practices of external discipline. Far from excluding them from his vow, La Colombière positively incorporates them, first by inserting, by a single stroke of the pen, all the *Rules of Modesty*, which especially set forth precepts of deportment and religious propriety, and the *Rules for Priests*, which for the most part are concerned with the administration of the sacraments and the direction of souls. "These rules," he declares, "contain nothing, I think, which can make me uneasy." In the *Summary of the Constitutions* and the *Common Rules*, he vows explicitly, on the ground of good example, certain detailed regulations, "never to omit without necessity the penances the Superior thinks I ought to perform" [A 3°]; in prayer, "to observe the *Additions* of St. Ignatius, whether for the preparation, or for the prayer itself" [A 10°]; at meals, "to say grace with reverence and devotion" [A 13°]; "to make the examinations of conscience twice daily, and the particular examen, and to note down my progress" [B 1°].

How are we to understand the obligation which the religious wishes to impose on himself in these points? Claude attached the highest value to the least observances. At the same time that he

made known to Father Athiaud this proposed vow, he wrote: "In breaking silence today . . . I disregarded an order with which the Holy Spirit inspired our holy Founder. It has not been my fault that regularity has not been wiped out. This rule is not so small a thing that the whole good of the body does not depend on it." [47]

Are we to think, nevertheless, that he would have wished to consider every one of these violations of rule, taken by itself, as a formal venial sin? Certainly not. Nor do the moralists ordinarily consider the accidental omission of a prayer a sin. That which they do consider sin, more or less grave, is the habitual neglect of all prayer during a more or less prolonged lapse of time. Could La Colombière have had the intention of undertaking an obligation in conscience which was opposed to these general principles, common at the time to the theologians of the Society of Jesus?

But was he not really wrong to be taking up such minute discussions in which concern for saving the letter ran the risk of making him forget, if not kill, the spirit? It is hardly probable that Claude would be disturbed by the difficulties which certain punctilious persons might propose today. A man of lofty aspirations, he wished to place himself under the strictest obligation, persuaded that the closer he made the tie that bound him to God, the more sincere and deserving would be the proof of love he would give God. Besides, he knew very well, and was practically certain, that he would not fail in the observance of his rule under such a vow. He knew this not only, or especially, because of his past experience, but as the result of a particular application of his theology of confidence. "I do not rely on my resoluteness, nor on my own strength, but on the goodness of God, which is infinite, and on His grace, which He never fails to bestow in abundance, and even in greater abundance, as one makes the effort to render Him greater service." [E 7°]

We will not now have much difficulty in resolving the second doubt proposed only a moment ago. Held in the grip of so many bonds, will not the soul be liable to lose her spontaneity of movement, to grow stiff in a kind of conformism, perhaps even to do good from an agonizing fear of doing wrong?

Such fear is indeed possible. To those who have read only certain extracts from his long retreat, Claude might at times give this impression of constraint. "By his strange concern for introspection," they say, "by his continual examinations of conscience, and considering the severe supervision to which he subjects even the most innocent desires or the most passing purposes, he gives the impression of an 'ascetic before a mirror.' Self-knowledge is good, but only on the condition that it does not stand in the way of work. And then, it might be said that by his many vows he makes himself like one who finds a satisfaction in walking and running after being bound with ribbons, or that he looks upon perfection as a series of performances. Virtuosity is not at all the same as virtue." We could go on without end on this theme.

To blunt the point of the paradox concealed in such remarks, why not observe, first of all, that Claude belonged to a generation that delighted in analyses? Can we then hold it against him? In 1674 Racine was the acknowledged master. But Claude's introspection is not mere self-contemplation, still less, as with many others, a dilettante's pastime or attempt at psychoanalysis. The very idea would have made him shudder. It is an examination which has no other purpose than to make sure of God's reign in the soul and to prepare for encounter. When Condren wrote: "Avoid thinking of yourselves and your offenses as you would hell," he meant without doubt a thinking which would be restricted to one's faults. He was finding fault with a self-consideration which would cause the soul to forget to contemplate Jesus Christ, and to neglect either to seek examples for imitation in His divine person, or to bring it under the radiance of His virtues. La Colombière had no other thought, and there was nothing he sought so much as this affectionate contemplation. No less than others, he wished to "avoid all uneasiness in spiritual matters." To such an extent, that like the purest Berullian, he thought "it a great secret in the Christian life to belong to God without attachment to anything." If, however, he consents to a little "constraint" in the spiritual life and is unwilling to stop turning a severe eye on his inner activity, it is because he fears to be misled and wishes to assure himself that his heart has

not too many of those attachments which prevent it from belonging entirely to God. Soon enough, however, these examens will become less necessary and will diminish in intensity. We will behold him in a new stage of his ascent, and, partly under the influence of the devotion to the Sacred Heart, tending to "perfect self-forgetfulness."

Moreover, if in La Colombière we come upon a spirit that is a bit judicial or meticulous, should we be surprised at this in the son of a royal notary? Many of his forebears were men of the law, or familiar with legal proceedings. Divine grace does not suppress the influence of heredity.

The true answer, however, is to be found elsewhere. Why should we claim to form an idea of a religious simply from the way he reacts in a retreat, that is, in the fleeting hours of the Exercises? Who would think of forming an opinion of a man, only or especially, from the way he engages in some kind of physical exercise? Now, according to St. Ignatius, "just as taking a walk, journeying on foot, and running are bodily exercises, so we call spiritual exercises every method of examination of conscience, of meditation, of contemplation, of vocal and mental prayer, and other spiritual activities which are intended to dispose the soul to rid itself of all inordinate attachments, and after their removal, seek and find the will of God." These exercises, whether physical or spiritual, are not our ordinary occupations. Profitable as they may be, they do not make up a man's ordinary life. We must judge him by their results. If, when they are multiplied—as during a period of military service, or during a long retreat—these exercises are the occasion of a bit of stiffness, or tension, if not of strain, supposing they are carried out under the direction of a wise instructor, they end not in shattering our energies, but in establishing them in perfect balance, increasing them and giving them greater flexibility.

This is exactly the benefit which Claude got out of his third year. A contemporary who lived long with him thus describes the ease and charm of his manners:

A sense of propriety and kindness accompanied all his movements, which had such an air of nobility that they dignified even the least of his actions. . . . He knew how to please, and when propriety per-

mitted him, to be very agreeable. There was nothing unsociable or tedious to his gravity and modesty. . . . His silence, his conversation, his demeanor, his activity, his whole exterior had so little stiffness and so much harmony, that whenever one met him he appeared to be a gentleman and a perfect religious. . . . It was his virtue that regulated his conduct, and shed that charming air over his manners which likewise edified all who came into contact with him.⁶

It would be useless to set against this judgment of Father de la Pesse, the appreciations of two triennial catalogues, 1672 and 1675, which we possess for this period of conversion, a period which intensified the effort of the religious in his exact observance of his rules. These two catalogues note some change in his outward behavior. His temperament is not seen to be "sweet" any longer, nor "rather shy," as in preceding years, but "balanced, sanguine, with a tendency to be over-solicitous and perhaps to fret, and a degree of melancholy."⁷ There is no background of sadness, but he is intent on the work of his perfection. It is not surprising that he should seem to be a bit withdrawn. He who never passed for the life of the party, was not during this time particularly expansive. Who would be surprised at that? Besides, expansiveness and likeableness are not synonymous, and the most delightful of our friends are not necessarily the noisiest.

As to the claim to have found in La Colombière, because of his vow, a Jansenist hatred of nature, a kind of pessimism which made him condemn everything that was pleasant in life, such a caricature would be entirely too gross a mistake, and would be a proof that one had not read him. What can be even more optimistic than his attitude, since at every moment he finds a motive for confidence in God's mercy, and invites us to find it in our misery and impotence?

⁶ Father de la Pesse, *Preface to the Sermons, Oeuvres*, I, 111. Father de la Pesse had known la Colombière personally, first at Avignon, where he was teaching with him in 1665, then at Lyons for two years, 1679, 1680.

⁷ These two catalogues, after having declared: "*profectus in studiis*: (1672) *eximius in humanioribus et rhetorica* (1675), *egregius in philosophia, theologia et humanioribus*" add: "*Naturalis complexio* (1672); *temperata vergens ad biliomelancholicam* (1675), *sanguinea et melancholica*." In the ensuing years there is no more mention of *melancholica*.

An observer with very sharp eyes, sometimes gently ironic, he complains indeed of worldlings, as did St. Augustine, allowing themselves to be fascinated by trifles. But for all that, he does not condemn those "holy persons" who have allowed themselves "some innocent pleasures," who have "loved flowers, experienced pleasure from paintings, been entertained by music, or others, who raised birds . . . wrote verse and read the most polished authors of antiquity."⁸ "I do not think any the less of them," he affirmed. And the way he speaks proves that he was sensitive to these delights. But God's love had taken first place in his eyes, and it is because of this very attraction that he distrusts self and is always on the defensive. If he refuses everything to himself, it is because he wishes to refuse nothing to God.

His vow is at bottom nothing else than the reducing to practice of what reliable commentators on the Gospel, or on St. Paul, ask: that we take no pleasure in the creature for itself. "Whether you eat or drink, or whatsoever else you do, do all for the glory of God" [1 Cor. 10:31]. We reflect that St. Augustine—who was however no Manichean or pessimist—reproaches himself in his *Confessions* for the too lively pleasure he found in the light, the bright light of Africa! La Colombière did not go that far. And besides, in resolving "never to seek for the pleasure which our nature finds" in the delight which may come from shows, music, perfumes, food [41, A], he had come to no strange or unheard of decision. What is extraordinary and heroic is that he made the vow to renounce them.

And what is strangest of all is that such a promise was never the occasion of the least scruple. For Claude the vow was an insurance taken out against possible failure. He foresaw the waverings, and fits and starts of nature; he cuts them short in advance. So strong a support did La Colombière find in this practice, that he renewed it on other matters all the rest of his life, and always with the same serenity. If, after having reflected, consulted, prayed, he made a vow on any point, the matter was closed. There was no further uneasiness, no fear of a fall, or of hesitation. And no more

⁸ *Oraison funèbre de Mme. de Nérestang*, IV, 480.

time was lost in working out a decision on each occasion. It was a haven of security, a liberation.

From the time of his long retreat he had foreseen that it would be so: "The exact care of obeying even the smallest observances," he wrote, "sets the spirit free, instead of causing it any constraint" [41, E]. Three years later, in London, in the light of his experience, he saw that he had not presumed too much on the divine assistance.

This expansion of soul which was produced in him by the practice of his vows, Claude had no difficulty in proclaiming publicly, to prove to his hearers the attractive power of Jesus crucified. On Good Friday, 1678, drawing his account of the Passion to a close in the chapel of the Palace of St. James, he said:

It is now a long time since I nailed myself to your Cross by the vows of my profession. I renew those vows. I ratify them in the presence of heaven and earth. . . . I protest that I do not find myself embarrassed by my bonds. On the contrary, I wish that I could multiply them, or make the knots still tighter. Why can I not, O my divine Redeemer, why can I not by a thousand thousand vows attach myself so closely to you that not only will I never be separated from you, but I will become even one with you!⁹

So, the long retreat, if it did not mark, as some have wrongly said, the summit of his perfection, at least announces it and prepares for it. The additional obligations which he assumes today are the bonds of love which will liberate him from every evil inclination, to attach him to God and to cause him to expand with joy.

An illustrious ascetic of the Orient, who is reproached with the

⁹ *Oeuvres* I, 334. In a certain collection of prayers—*Ritus et Preces*—use has been made of this passage and the lines which follow in the sermon, to make an Act of Consecration to the Sacred Heart; which is legitimate enough, but to attribute the consecration to the Sacred Heart to Father la Colombière, thus composed, becomes something of a fraud. What would we think of an author who, choosing in St. Augustine or Bossuet a colloquy with Christ on the Cross, would insert in it the name of the Sacred Heart, and offer it as a prayer of St. Augustine, or of Bossuet, to the Sacred Heart? The only act of consecration, or more accurately of "Oblation to the Sacred Heart of Jesus Christ," composed by Blessed Claude is that which has been published at the end of his London Retreat, of which we speak at the end of Chapter xv.

frequency of his vows, replied: "God is a perpetual vow."¹⁰ In fact, the vow which, far from destroying or fossilizing our will, stabilizes it, is the best means in the power of man to conform himself to the immutability of God.

11

Last Weeks of the Tertianship

ANYONE who fancies that it is enough for the saints to take a firm and sincere resolution in order to impose quiet thenceforth on all the crosscurrents of their souls should be advised to read certain confidences of the Blessed Claude written a few days after his long retreat. For example:

It is strange how many enemies one must struggle against from the moment one takes the resolution to become a saint. It seems that everything is loosed against him, the demon with his artifices and the world with its attractions. Why, even within the protecting walls of the Tertianship, in the ideal peace of the Presqu'île d'Ainay! . . . If God visits you, there is vanity to fear; if He withdraws, timidity; despair may follow on the greatest fervor. Our friends are a temptation to us because of the willingness to please which we have come to have for them; acquaintances by our fear of displeasing them. In fervor there is indiscretion to fear, in moderation sensuality, and self-love everywhere. [77]

These are not merely fine-sounding phrases. La Colombière writes down in God's sight, for himself and for his Instructor, what he feels within himself. For this man, endowed with an extreme sensitiveness, who instinctively blends with his surroundings, to cause displeasure is particularly intolerable. A few weeks later, with regard to an incident which he said "had all but unsettled his resolutions," he again wrote:

¹⁰ A word taken up by Mahatma Gandhi.

I recognize that I have not yet choked this empty fear of men, I mean human respect, and that, although by a great stroke of Your mercy, dear God, I managed to survive a number of encounters, aided by Your all-powerful grace, I recognize, however, my wretchedness, and I feel that it is You alone who do all the good in me. I would be offending You every moment very grievously, if You did not reach out Your hand to draw me from the mire to which my inclinations would carry me, and to which my too complacent nature would lead me. . . . [100]

When a tendency is deeply rooted, how can one hope that its manifestations will disappear all of a sudden? But here is something more surprising still and more consoling for our weaknesses. . . . One will never claim, after this painful admission, that hagiography presents the saints all ready-made, without showing how "one becomes a saint."

When I consider my inconstancy, I tremble with fear that I am among the number of the reprobate. Dear God, what disorder, what rebellion! One moment I am gay, another sad. Today I am a friend to all the world, tomorrow I will be like a porcupine which one cannot touch without being pricked. It is a sign of slight virtue. . . . But a man who has his support in God who is immovable cannot be shaken. . . . No matter what annoyance comes, he is content, because he has no other will than God's. O Blessed state! O peace, O repose! But one must struggle to arrive at this. [101]

Struggle, that is the password. But not alone, for God is with him. The two forces are joined. There is nothing here of a Pelagian voluntarism, with all its trust in human effort. The religious watches and prays. He prays especially in order to gain the strength to watch . . . and to triumph.

Right up to the end of the third year, following the liturgical cycle, he continues to note down the alternations of the struggle. The feast of St. Andrew was the occasion of his confirming his resolutions on suffering. "The Saint sought the cross with all the alacrity and the fear of a man who is afraid that he will not find it, that he cannot find it soon enough. Thus, you would say that he had found a treasure. But from the moment he finds it, the rapture he betrays is that of a passionate lover utterly possessed by his love." [86]

Claude dedicated a week to St. Francis Xavier, and on the last day he was favored with what looks like a vision of the future.

Suddenly there was a great light in my mind. I thought I saw myself loaded down with chains and irons, dragged to prison, accused, condemned, because I had preached Jesus crucified and dishonored by sinners. . . . Must I die by the hand of an executioner? Am I to be dishonored by some calumny? At this my whole body trembled and I felt myself in the grip of terror. Would God judge me worthy to suffer something spectacular for His honor and glory? I saw no likelihood of it. But if God did me this honor, I would gladly embrace whatever it was—prison, calumny, insults, contempt, sickness, whatever He should like to send. It is only our sufferings that please Him. I felt—but I may be mistaken—I thought that God was preparing something evil for me to suffer. Send them, these evils, my lovable Savior. Obtain them for me, great apostle, and I will thank God forever for them, and praise you. [97]

La Colombière devoted a number of meditations to the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin. There were successive ascents of the mind, anticipations of the means of stripping himself more and more of created things in order to purify his heart, the manner in which Jesus Christ "could come as He did in Mary, with pleasure." Fully determined to belong only to God, he cries: "I am more afraid of myself than of my most redoubtable enemies." But, "if once it pleases You, great God, take away this heart while it is purer and cleaner, for fear that creatures might steal it from you." [99] Had he caught a glimpse of how God would hear him, that he had only four years more to work, seven to live?

The Sundays of Advent, when St. John the Baptist is kept in mind by the readings from the Gospel, naturally remind him of the first preaching of the Precursor, which was repentance. "I have deserved hell; I have crucified my God; that should foment in my heart a holy hatred of myself." [103] It is especially the complete unselfishness of John the Baptist that holds him, his concern to refer to Christ alone the words of praise which might be referred to him personally. We guess that Claude is sometimes tempted to judge his brethren. Called by God to observe his rules very strictly, he cannot help observing that some keep them less exactly. He admits even that he is subject

to the "appeals of the lukewarm." [77] What is he to do? Deny the evidence? That is impossible. Pass an adverse judgment? He has no right to do so.

There are few of my brethren in whom I do not find some excellence which I do not have. It may well be that they have faults, but the greater number are involuntary, and a sinner like me should hardly notice them. I should excuse them and keep my eyes upon my own. Their virtues are as a rule true virtues. I see some with a fiery temperament preserve great self-control, practicing the most repulsive humiliations in spite of their distinguished birth. I see them austere and mortified in spite of a delicate constitution. [105]

Claude also made his own the word of the Precursor in the gospel for the third Sunday: "There hath stood one in the midst of you whom you knew not," to apply it to his own preoccupations: "God is in the midst of us, and we do not seem to recognize Him. He is in our brethren and He wishes to be served, loved and honored in them. . . . If I make a single exception, it is not Jesus Christ whom I see in them. . . . If I love them, it is to be loved by them in turn, made much of, or because their frame of mind is like my own." [106]

There must be vigilance, but especially prayer. Not a resolution but offers an occasion for prayer, under the form of repentance, of thanksgiving, of oblation, of supplication. Claude had previously noted: "By God's mercy, I feel considerable attraction to prayer." But it was not its sweetness that he was seeking. "I am not worthy of it, I have not enough strength to support it. Extraordinary graces are not good for me. It would be building on sand to give them to me. It would be like pouring a precious liqueur into a leaking cask, which could hold nothing. I ask of God a prayer that is solid, simple, which glorifies Him and does not inflate me." [52]

But at Christmas, he is filled with that sweetness which he had not ventured to ask for. There is no more meditation; he contemplates. "With a very delicious relish and a very clear insight I have considered the excellence of the acts which the Blessed Virgin practiced at the birth of her Son. I admired her purity of heart and the love with which she was burning for the divine Infant. I thought that I saw the

movements of her heart, and I was enraptured at the sight." [109]

Throughout all the feasts he was given over to these movements of joy, of thanksgiving, of desire, being urged to such an extent "to keep himself united with God made a child," that he could think of nothing else, unable, so carried away was he with the thought, to stifle exclamations which he thought, however, unbecoming. "You are good, dear God, to reward so liberally the violence I have done to myself." "Unutterable consolations," which troubled him, and wrested from him the cry: "Cease, my sovereign and lovable Master, to fill me with Your favors, for I know how unworthy I am of them. You will accustom me to serve You out of selfishness, or You will oblige me to some excess. For what would I not do, if You did not oblige me to obey my director, to merit a moment of these delights with which You are filling me?" But, thinking that these purely gratuitous graces are the fruit of the suffering of the Infant-God who is born today, he feels a kind of regret for enjoying them, and adds: "Fill me with miseries and sufferings to give me some share in Yours. I will not believe that You love me until You have made me suffer much and long. It is I who committed the fault; is it just that the child should be punished for the servant?" [110]

Good news was on the way about this same time to add to these joys. In a letter of November 24, 1674, to Father de la Chaize, now provincial of Lyons, the father general authorized La Colombière to pronounce the solemn vows of the profession. Having entered the novitiate October 22, 1659, the length of time in religion required by the Institute had elapsed. Without resorting to any privilege, Claude could be promoted to his grade.

It was decided that he would pronounce this definitive engagement on the following February 2nd, and,—so a document of the archives declares—into the hands of his much loved Father Instructor, *in manus sui amantissimi Gilberti Athiaud*. This gave him a month in which to prepare, the last month of his third year, for, once professed, he was sure to be sent forth into God's harvest.

To judge what were his feelings these last weeks, we have not only the retreat which preceded February 2nd, but first, a short touching note which may serve as a prelude.

The father cannot help realizing that "men esteem him and take him for somebody." Perhaps he already knew of his appointment as superior at Paray-le-Monial. But against these laudatory appreciations, he sets up the judgment of God which alone counts,—of God who can do without us "as easily as though we had never been, and who without us will accomplish all that He plans to do, who has a thousand servants more zealous, more faithful, more acceptable in His eyes . . . and who can make use of the most miserable of men for His most splendid designs." At the thought of the souls in need who are to be found in the field of his apostolic labors, the prayer rises once again, confident, humble, determined, offering^g himself for the holocaust:

How wonderful, all lovable God, if one day You were to make use of my weakness! If all I had to do was to wish it, I do wish it with all my heart. It is true that one must be holy to make others holy, and my very notable faults give me to understand how far I am from being holy. But make me holy, dear God, and do not spare me in making me good. I wish to become so at any cost. [113]

We can guess the fervor of a retreat that was begun with desires of such intensity. It is on God alone that he is going to concentrate his attention. In Book Three of his important work, *De Studio Orationis*, Alvarez de Paz, after having pointed out some subjects for meditation for beginners, and then for those who are advancing, finally offers some for the perfect, that is,—for one should not misunderstand—for souls who are entirely given to a life of perfection. He invites them to contemplate God and His infinite perfections. This was the guide whom La Colombière took for his retreat, on the advice of course of his Father Instructor. Of the ninety contemplations which Alvarez devoted to this inexhaustible subject—nine "decades"—Claude does not take the trouble to choose. That would be a loss of time, and in a work in which God's grace must be supreme, would leave too much to one's mere liking. What he especially needs is an outline, so that he will not have to ask himself each day where to go for nourishment. Quite simply he fixes on six contemplations of the first decade, the being of God, His spirituality, His simplicity, His

immortality, His perfection, His eternity, persuaded that the Holy Spirit will find for him in any subject the lights and affections he needs in his present state.

God's mercy does not appear in this first series. Alvarez does not touch upon it until his fourth decade, and then with what abundance! No matter. Claude feels so great a need of this mercy, and has vowed it such devotion, that he cannot think of God, or of one of His attributes, without having it appear to him. But here "he is penetrated with a deep respect for this incomprehensible greatness" of God, "who can lose nothing, gain nothing, who includes all being within Himself, who is the source of being, who cannot depend on any other being in any respect whatsoever, neither to be, nor to be better." Never "has he so well understood the nothingness of all things than when he places them against this idea." His wonder is extreme when he thinks that such a God, "so independent," "deigns to think of men, diverts Himself, so to say, by hearing their prayers, asking their services. . . . I thought I beheld a great king who would concern himself with an anthill." His imagination is on the point of running wild. If he failed to control it, would he, crushed and paralyzed, have any strength left to pray?

What brought me back from my amazement is that He is as merciful, as kind as He is great and good. He is an abyss of splendor, it is true, but He is also an abyss of mercy. That is what encourages me to hope, to venture to approach Him, to speak to Him. Without this insight, I do not think that I would even dare to think of God. I will, however, think of Him, dear God. . . .

In spite of his woes, in spite of the desires he continues to feel "of being esteemed, loved and praised," [114] Claude regains his unalterable confidence.

His desire to be loved is going to meet with a specially severe trial. To leave Lyons, a city where he had acquired so many connections, because of his family, his years of study, and still more his teaching and his ministry! "Remaining a long time in the same place," he observes, "one unconsciously becomes attached and takes root, a fact

which becomes painfully evident when one feels the separation. It is a kind of death to go from a place where one is known and where one has a number of friends." [118] A kind of death. . . . There was nothing, however, of the romantic or quixotic to La Colombière, he was merely human.

It was with respect to the "simplicity of God" that the admission escaped him. It was a heart-rending cry. "I find myself inclined to imitate this simplicity of God in my affections, loving God alone, and accepting in my soul only that love. This is easy, since I find in God all that I can love in others . . ." And then suddenly a stirring burst of sincerity:

But, my friends, they love me, I love them. You see that and I feel it. Dear God who are alone good, alone lovable! Must I sacrifice them to You because You wish me to be entirely Yours? I will do it. This sacrifice will cost me more dearly than the first I offered when I left father and mother. But I will make this sacrifice, and I will make it gladly, since You forbid me to give any of my friendship to any creature.

And then, finally, the prayer of oblation, in which the soul regains possession of itself, and comes to rest:

Accept it, this hard sacrifice, but in exchange, my divine Savior, do you be their friend. . . . I will remind You of them every day in my prayers . . . I will importune You so much that I will oblige You to make them know and esteem the blessing they will have in the commandment which You give me to have no other friend, so that I may be Yours. Be You, therefore, Jesus, their one and true friend! [117]

Claude did not forget this oblation. Three years later from London, he wrote to his brother Humbert with a frankness at which no one could take offense: "Although I love you tenderly, I would willingly consent to be blotted from your memory if it were Jesus Christ who took my place, for it is He alone Who deserves your affection."¹

"Jesus, the one and true friend. . . ." Although it bears no date, we think that we can place in this period, because of the identity of the expressions, the composition of an essay of five or six pages on "St.

¹ *Oeuvres*, VI, 272.

John, the Friend of Jesus Christ," which the editors have made the thirty-ninth of the *Réflexions Chrétiennes*, a penetrating elevation of mind on the genuine marks of friendship, and which ends with this delightful prayer:

Jesus, You are the one and only, the true friend. You share in our misfortunes, You lay them upon Yourself, You know the secret of turning them to my good. You listen to me with kindness when I tell you my woes, and You never fail to sweeten them. I find you always and everywhere. You never go away, and if I am obliged to change my dwelling, I never fail to find You wherever I go. You never grow weary of listening to me. You never leave off doing me good. If I love you, I am sure of being loved. You have nothing to gain from my possessions, and You do not make Yourself poor in sharing Yours with me. Miserable as I may be, one who is more noble, one who is more intelligent, one who is more holy, will not deprive me of your friendship, and death, which tears us away from all our friends, should unite me with You. All mischances of life or of fortune cannot separate You from me. On the contrary, I will never rejoice more fully in You, You will never be nearer to me, than when everything is most opposed to me. You endure my defects with wonderful patience. Even my infidelities, my ingratitude, do not wound you to the extent that you are not ready to return, if I will have you.²

When from this time on we try to picture Claude at prayer, it is to pages like this rather than to his retreat notes that we like to refer.

Reaching the end of his tertianship and on the eve of pronouncing his solemn vow of obedience, Claude thought it well to give it point, secretly, by obliging himself, "never to show any inclination or repugnance for any work his superiors might assign him." But even this was not enough. He added: "If my superiors happen to leave it to my choice, I promise, dear God, to renew the vow which You have inspired me to make, of choosing always the work and the place for which I feel the greater repugnance, and where I think before God and in all truth, I will have the most to suffer." [122]

Where were superiors going to send him this time? The decision of the provincial, Father de la Chaize, was baffling to many. Claude's

² *Réflexions chrétiennes, Oeuvres*, V, 429.

talents, his success, pointed him out for the pulpits of a large city. But no. God had taken literally his desires for a hidden life. He was sent to a small town that had only sixteen hundred souls, Paray-le-Monial;³ a tiny residence, which was not even independent, but belonged to the college of Roanne; a house that was less than modest, with three windows in the front, one story or two, if you call an attic under the roof a story. It was an auxiliary municipal college, employing two teachers, the equivalent of a communal school of our day. What a difference from the colleges of Avignon, Paris, and Lyons, where he had lived up to then! Here, there will be no more fine audiences, no chance of the world's applause. Endé⁴ was the companionship with the Bouhours, the Colberts, the Patrus.

What was Father de la Chaize thinking of? However, he knew La Colombière, having been his rector at Lyons for three years, and his provincial for several months. Besides, this superior had a penetrating mind, was a wise counsellor, whom the Archbishop, Camille de Neuville, could not long do without. While rector of the College of the Trinity he had in a few months checked the breakdown in discipline and brought about a fresh zest for study together with a re-flourishing of solid devotion. So well known were his qualities, that at the death of Father Ferrier, confessor to Louis XIV, the Marquis de Villeroy, brother of the archbishop of Lyons, proposed de la Chaize as his successor. And the king despite the custom which reserved this office for a religious of Paris, precisely in this month of January, 1675, had chosen this Jesuit from Forez as confessor. Too shrewd not to have recognized the worth of La Colombière, why did he not find him a better post?

So buzzed the foolish wisdom of the world. In sending La Colombière to Paray-Le-Monial, Father de la Chaize had reasons which we shall soon understand. For a complicated spiritual task, which he

³ The episcopal visitation in 1669 indicates, for the entire extent of the parish, that is, including the hamlets and villages dependent on the city, 1600 to 1700 communicants. The canonical visitation made by the archpriest of Charolles in 1689, indicated about 2,200 communicants, or an increase of an average of twenty-five per year (Archives depart. de Saône-et-Loire. Fonds Evêché d'Autun).

suspected to be quite difficult and which demanded a very enlightened guide, one who was prudent and daring, he assigned one of his sons whom he knew through and through, "his right-hand man." At the same time, our Lord at Paray-le-Monial was giving a chosen soul who was in need of his guidance a glimpse of this director in these words: "I will send you my faithful servant and perfect friend."

..

☞ PART TWO

Paray-le-Monial

A Monastic City

"DEAR GOD, I want to become holy between You and me," Claude had written. And again: "To live in a perfect detachment of affection in the midst of the world . . . only God can work this miracle in me." [8] God was going to undertake it, but by means that Claude had not foreseen.

As the Jesuits at Paray-le-Monial were subject to the college at Roanne, it is probable that La Colombière, on his way from Lyons, stopped a few days in this town to get instructions from the rector. Then, towards the end of February, by way of Marcigny and Saint-Yan, he came into view of Paray.

On his right, to the south, near the tranquil waters of the Bourbince, rose the three Romanesque towers of the fine church of the Benedictine Priory. A little behind it, the squat mass of the chateau, flanked by two towers, the municipal citadel and the residence of the captain-chatelain. On a hill to his left, beyond the walls of the city and overlooking it, was the old parish church of Notre Dame, unassuming in the midst of tombs. Between the two sanctuaries the little town was spread, climbing gently to the north, austere in the uninterrupted girdle of walls, which at long intervals, were protected by heavy, round corner-turrets, a kind of fortress set up for defense, but which sheltered no soldiers.

Passing through the Pérrier gate, Claude turned to his right,

climbed a gentle slope, and arrived at the subsidiary church of Saint-Nicolas, almost in front of which was his new place of abode.

The quiet city into which La Colombière had just come, enjoyed a political government quite its own. After the Count-Bishop of Auxerre, Hugh de Chalons, had in 999 made a gift to Cluny of the monastery at Paray, the Abbot of the Cluniac Order became the lord and dean, not only for his religious, but also for the population of the whole countryside. He was permanently represented by a prior surrounded by a number of monks. Hence the name "Monial" given to the town. For the collection of tithes and rents, he ordinarily made use of the services of a lay representative. Lower and middle court actions were delegated to a bailiff, the king reserving the higher courts to himself through the intermediary of the governor of the Charollais. Municipal interests, such as the supply of provisions, markets, policing, and guard mounts, the opening and closing of the city gates, urban administration, were handed over to the "community," or the communal assembly of leading citizens who were presided over by a syndic and four sheriffs. In 1675 the syndic was a notary, Pierre Billet, brother of the Jesuit Antoine Billet, whom we have already met at Avignon, and who very soon became a friend of Father La Colombière.

The middle class at Paray was relatively numerous. The officials of the salt distribution were located there. The large number of tanners and dressers of leather retained a king's minister for the control of the hide industry. The deanship of Cluny, the Prince de Condé, and many other nobles had their farm managers here. The number of eleven lawyers and five notaries or representatives for so small a town bore witness to the litigious spirit that prevailed among the contemporaries of the *Plaideurs* and which was the natural outcome of the complexity of laws and customs.

Among the members of the old Charollais nobility living at Paray, François de Reclesnes de Lyonne, capitain-chatelain of the town, shone in the first rank. His sister, Marie, of all Claude's spiritual conquests, was to be the most celebrated and to hold out the longest against surrender.

What was the condition of the people under the authority of the

Abbatial crosier? We get a full account in the *Réflexions Chrétiennes* of La Colombière: "Not a bit of human kindness. Men endowed with reason are left to die of hunger, while dogs and horses get what is refused to creatures whom God has formed in His own image." But he wrote that in the chapter "*On the World*," and it was not Paray that he so stigmatized. To be sure, the people were not rich, and they worked hard. Some cultivated the land roundabout, others were engaged in business and the trades. They were a needy people, but not wretchedly poor. At long intervals, when want appeared to be threatening, one could see the beginnings of revolution. But justice got the upper hand against the monopolists. In this "monastic" country, life, while not an earthly paradise, flowed along peaceably enough.

But Catholics were not the only inhabitants here. Despite the heroism of their syndic, Messire Claude Bouillet, who was killed at the Périer gate in 1581, defending his town against a band of Huguenots, Calvinism had managed to seep in. It is hard to say exactly to what extent. The annalist of the Visitation, Mother de Chaugy, spoke truly in 1638, "of the dark shadows of heresy which fall over a great number of the inhabitants of this small region." But a metaphor is not statistics. The historian of the college at Roanne is more conservative and is content to say that when the Jesuits arrived at Paray in 1619, Calvinists were living there in "large numbers," *frequens numerus*. When towards the middle of the century, the Protestants, finally wishing to build a church, claimed in their favor that they formed more than one-fourth of the population, we can suppose that they were bragging. But if they constituted only a minority, it was at least an influential one. For a long time they could claim a councillor of the Parliament of Dijon, M. Salvert. They were found in nearly all the liberal professions; among them were a notary, a court secretary, a procurator, a treasurer, men and women school teachers, a number of surgeons and druggists, besides business men, skilled workers, such as tanners, leather-dressers, shoemakers, stove-makers, goldsmiths, coppersmiths, innkeepers, locksmiths, weavers, carpenters. In 1682 the curé, M. Bouillet, made this complaint: "It is notorious that almost the only well-to-do in this town are the so-called Reformers. They hold the greater part of the inhabitants in their power by means

of the loans they make them, and hence take occasion to mistreat them, to annoy and insult any who resist them, and to make themselves masters of the city hall. Here they create magistrates who are favorable to them." From this we can see that they were a daring and enterprising minority.

It was principally to prevent this minority from growing, and if possible to reduce it, that the Jesuits were called to Paray.

There was a strange situation at the Priory. Since the reform attempted at Cluny in 1621 by D^{om} de Veny d'Arbouze, the Order counted two parallel observances under the authority of a single abbot, that of the Old and that of the Reformed. In 1670, one of these latter, Dom Eustache d'Avesnes, having become prior of Paray, the monastery was handed over to the Reformed with the stipulation that the two members of the Old Group be replaced at their death by religious of the strict observance. But the two had managed to introduce a third of their number into the place, and by an unheard of interpretation of the axiom, "Three make a chapter" (*tres faciunt capitulum*), one of the three, Jean Bouzitat, had himself named prior with the result that the community which was composed of eight members presented the spectacle of a body with two heads. The Jesuits who were bound by an agreement to preach in the Benedictine church—the present basilica—"on the Sundays of Advent and Lent and the feasts of the Blessed Virgin," came into frequent contact with the monks. If La Colombière intervened in an effort to restore peace, it was without much success. For, the regrettable lawsuits brought by the pseudo-prior were still going on in 1685.

The parish church dedicated to Our Lady was situated on a hill to the north of the city walls. When Urban II, a former monk of Cluny, brought the relics of St. Nicholas from Bari on the Adriatic, Paray wished to build within the walls a subsidiary church as a home to shelter the relics that were brought there. Pillaged and burned in 1477, it was rebuilt at the beginning of the following century. More accessible and larger than the higher sanctuary, Saint-Nicolas became in fact the ordinary place of worship, and served practically as parish church. But it was really only a dependency and the title always remained with Notre Dame.

The pastor, Jean-Éléonor Bouillet, belonged to one of the most prominent families of Paray, a family that had spread out into so many branches that it became necessary to distinguish between the Bouilllets of Saint-Leger, of Boissire, of Lafin, and of Lheurtière. M. Jean-Éléonor belonged to these last. A contract obliged the Jesuits to preach three times a week at Saint-Nicolas during Advent and Lent. Besides, the college and the presbytery being almost adjoining, there were constant relations between the two. M. Bouillet was not long in making friends with La Colombière.

Some fifteen priests lived in the neighborhood of Saint-Nicolas, grouped under the title of "*mépart*," then commonly enough used in Bourgogne. "These parish priests and chaplains," declared their statutes, "did not make up a college, or a body, and had no other superior than the Most Reverend Father in Christ, the Bishop of Autun." Their object was simply to carry out the sacred duties imposed by the numerous foundations made by the faithful,—processions, office, and especially Masses, read and sung. Only those priests could be affiliated to the "*mépart*" whose relatives living in the parish of Notre Dame "paid the parish dues and assessments laid on the inhabitants of the town." As the benefices accruing to their occupations were not enough to support them, each one before his admission had to furnish proof that he possessed a patrimony that was worth at least a hundred livres a year.

After this glance at Paray-le-Monial, we must get a closer look at the house and community where La Colombière had just been named superior. Long before the wish of Christ set up a spiritual bond between Claude and Margaret Mary, circumstances at Paray-le-Monial had drawn the Society of Jesus into close relations with the Visitation of St. Mary. At the request of the Marquise de Ragny, wife of the governor of the Charollais and sister-in-law of the Bishop of Autun, two Jesuits had come from the college at Roanne in 1619 to preach the Lent at Paray. The proud assurance of the Calvinists, the sarcasm which they poured on Church affairs and the shaveling monks, did not fail to leave an impression on the Catholics. The population was in need of instruction and encouragement. In the *rue de la Saulnerie*, on the very site of the future sanctuary of the Visitation where Christ

was to appear fifty years later, pious townspeople and merchants had placed some lodgings at the disposition of the religious. The more inviting of these lodgings had become a chapel. The Jesuits there set up a mission, where two priests, sometimes three, relieved each other year after year. "Mission," that is to say, a kind of roving camp, dependent on the college at Roanne, as opposed to a "residence," so that it would be known that no stable engagements had been undertaken with the town of Paray.¹

In 1626 the superior of the house was Father Paul de Barry, the author of the well known book *Pensez-y bien*. During Lent several persons who were desirous of entering religion, confided in him that they found no other obstacle to their desires than the absence of a convent of any kind in the land. An "eloquent discourse" followed "in a common gathering in which it was made clear that a convent of good religious women contributes to the glory, the happiness, and the advantage of a town." So successful was his effort, that his hearers cried out with one voice: "Bring us, dear Father, the order which you think best able to render us this service."²

Father de Barry was not acquainted with the Visitandines. But his companion, Father Jean Aymères, who had seen them in Savoy, spoke so highly of them, that the superior did not hesitate. He wrote to Lyon-en-Bellecour to have Mother de Blonay allow a foundation, and to make sure of the approval of the saintly Mother de Chantal. The authorizations of the governor, of his brother the bishop of Autun, of the Abbot of Cluny, Mgr. d'Arbouze, of the archbishop of Lyons, Denys de Marquemont, who at the time was living in Rome, and of the spiritual father of Bellecour, the Count de la Faye, who was at Paris, were obtained in a few months time. On September 4, 1626, in the midst of an enthusiasm which carried the good people so far as to slash the garments of the nuns to make relics, the Visitandines were

¹ The catalogue of 1629 insists on this temporary character, by putting before the names of three religious, "*ad tempus sunt*," "temporarily."

² *Histoire de la fondation du monastère de la Visitation Sainte-Marie de Paray-le-Monial, établi le 4 septembre 1626*. Autun, 1926. This booklet is taken almost entirely from the account of Mother de Chaugy. Cf. the very interesting theses of Ernestine Lecoutourier, *Françoise-Madeleine de Chaugy et la tradition salésienne au XVII^e siècle* (1933).

put in possession of some small quarters in the northern section of the town, between the apse of Saint-Nicolas and the city walls.

Before long difficulties arose. The site was damp and unhealthy, and made nearly all the sisters sick, and after November 10 brought on the death of one of them. The garden, exposed to the north and almost without sun, was too small for cloistered religious. To the west was the municipal college, and to the east a community bake-oven. Between the two, there was "such noise and hubbub," that one could hardly "nourish the spirit of prayer." Add to this a well, which was shared by others, between the convent and the oven, to which the curious flocked to watch through an opening in the wall for the nuns "when they came for water and talk with them." Cloister was impossible. The abbot was willing to permit the nuns to buy the oven, on condition of another being built elsewhere, at their expense. This caused an uproar in the neighborhood. The well caught "so much soot and filth" that it became useless. To cap their misfortunes came the great plague of 1628. One of the sisters developed three large carbuncles. The surgeon who had withdrawn to the country, refused any consultations, except from his post on the other side of the city moat, and then very briefly. The superior was reduced to giving news of the patient through a little grilled window of the turret which overlooked the rampart at the end of the garden. "The sister will die in three days if she is not bled," was the doctor's conclusion, taking at once to his heels, his nose in a scented mask. Finally, the devil took a hand by setting up a cemetery for the pest-ridden just opposite the little convent, with only the moat between them.

Moved to pity by so much distress, Mother de Chantal would have her daughters get out of "so wretched a spot." She insists on it in five or six letters. The sisters admit that Father de Barry's leaving was a "bitter disappointment to them." But where were they to go? They had no cash on hand, "all they own are these houses." On their side the Jesuits were strong for keeping them at Paray. The Saint wrote: "I very willingly agree with them, and I think their view sound and good, as coming from souls in whom I believe the spirit of God resides." The spirit of God did more. To facilitate matters, the Jesuits in 1632 proposed that the daughters of St. Chantal exchange houses

with them. The *rue de la Saulnerie* became the *rue de la Visitation*. The convent which Jesus Christ wished at Paray-le-Monial, for the revelation of the treasures of His Sacred Heart, was definitely established there.

The Jesuits had not waited this long to take up their teaching. From 1622 Father Philibert Coutier was entered in the catalogue as *docens pueros* (teaching boys), and the following year, a religious for whom the future reserved the office of provincial at Lyons during the youth of La Colombière, Father Laurent Grannon, discharged at Paray the office of catechist. In 1632, by reason of their change of residence, the Jesuits became nextdoor neighbors of the municipal college, and were asked to send a father there to teach grammar. The Marquise de Ragny soon set up a fund which produced two hundred livres a year for the support of this teacher. In 1647 the people of Paray made a fresh request which they sent directly to the father general in Rome. Through the mediation of one of the judges, Messire Baudrieux, they asked for a second professor.

Three years later, under the generalate of Father Piccolomini, the matter was taken up again. Although the province of Lyons had trouble supplying enough subjects for its established colleges, the following arguments succeeded in carrying the day: "First: the fruit gathered in these places infected by heresy is very great. Second: the good will of the inhabitants of Paray towards us has always been steadfast. Third: it is to be feared that some priests, a number of whom are favorable to Jansenius, will corrupt completely because of these errors, a city which is already under attack by the Huguenots." A consultor also turned to account the argument that they should "not give offense to Prince de Conti, Abbot of Cluny, by abandoning under such circumstances a city which was under his authority." The provincial only asked that the house at Paray, if it were erected into a residence, should continue to depend on the College of Lyons, as it had done since 1638. It was only in 1659, that it was again attached to the college at Roanne, and this time for good.

Father Piccolomini's approval was no more given than the Paro-
dians gave the Jesuits complete possession of the "collegiate house adjoining their "residence," June 29, 1651, and the following year

they allotted them an income of eleven hundred livres for the support of five religious, of whom two were teachers. The municipal college, reduced to the lower classes, was transferred to a nearby street.

About the same time, the Bouillets, who were neighbors to the west of the college and the residence, had built a little chapel on the farther side of their home. This chapel they surrendered to the use of the Jesuits, under the very burdensome condition that all the members of the family—and there were four or five branches!—have the right of being buried in it. A few years later, it became apparent that this obligation would very likely turn a place of prayer which was hardly thirteen by thirty-five feet into a focus of infection. In 1671, the religious, under Father Pierre Papon as superior, paid eight hundred livres to the Bouillets for their right, and became independent owners of the chapel.

Beginning with 1661, the two religious entrusted with the teaching began to carry four classes simultaneously, from the fifth form to humanities. One of them, Jean Carrat, although he had passed his fiftieth year, was still a scholastic. For reasons of health, despite a good course in theology, he had to give up the thought of the priesthood.

Such was the situation in the modest residence when Claude arrived to assume control in 1675. Besides Jean Carrat, he found there two of his fellow-novices, Father Blaise Forest of Lyons, who was well gifted as a preacher, and Father François La Bonnardière, a Savoyard, who was numbered among "the most cultivated professors of letters" the province then possessed.

Very soon La Colombière, impelled no doubt by parents and by his recollections of Paris and Lyons, made vigorous efforts to develop the college. In September 1675, he obtained a teacher, Father Louis Miraillon, who was capable of teaching the two classes of humanities and rhetoric, the other regent taking over the fourth and third forms. In the following year the principal of the municipal college, Jacques Dumeny, was engaged at an annual salary of seventy-five livres to teach the elements of Latin to the better pupils, so that they would be able to "enter the college of the Reverend Jesuit Fathers in the fourth form." The effort must have been given up after Claude's departure.

Rhetoric, doubtless because of a lack of students rather than a professor, was no longer mentioned in the catalogue, and does not seem ever to have been resumed.

La Colombière also found the Bouillet chapel too small. In 1675 Louis XIV, learning from Father de la Chaize of the poverty of the little college, made a gift of five hundred livres to the superior, through the intermediary of the procurator of Cluny. Anxious to be fully faithful to the prescriptions of the sixth general congregation of the Society of Jesus, Claude did not wish to keep this sum for the use of his community, and in the receipt which he sent to M. de Pelisson, he promised to use this money "to build a church." Thus, the following year, an occasion being offered of buying the Bouillet property, which was situated between the residence and the little chapel, he took advantage of it at once. In acquiring possession, April 28, 1676, of "the house, stable, and garden" from Marie-Pernette Bouillet, widow of Guinet de Villorbaine, it was not the house that he had in mind. A few months later he rented it to its former owner. What he wanted was the garden, either for the games of his school-boys, or for the building of the proposed church.

At all events, La Colombière was not able himself to undertake this building. The church was not erected until after his death. Finished in 1685, it was to shelter his remains at least for nearly eighty years, until the suppression of the Society of Jesus by Parliament.

If God had led La Colombière to Paray-le-Monial, it was to co-operate in another task, a work of divine love, of which we must now speak.

Margaret Mary Alacoque

AS we look back over the interval of time and attempt to determine the place which Blessed Claude occupies in a general history of the saints, we are led to repeat of him what is written of St. John the Baptist: "He was a man sent from God . . . for a witness, to give testimony of the light that all might believe through him. He was not the light, but was to give testimony of the light" (Jo. 1:6, 7). The time has come for La Colombière to fulfill this mission.¹

At this time there was a nun living at the Visitation named Margaret Mary Alacoque. The least that could be said about her was that she was "a sign of contradiction" for those who lived with her. From an early age she had been chosen by Jesus from among all others, and endowed with graces of a mystical order. On her entrance to the convent in 1671, the mistress of novices, Mother Thouvant, did not conceal from her that extraordinary ways, ecstasies and visions, were not at all in "the spirit of the daughters of St. Mary." As a trial, her superior frequently sent her sweeping, or put her at other domestic duties while her companions were at their prayer. The longing that compelled her to live continually united to God, absorbed in Him, abstracted in mind, seemed to be an obstacle to her remaining in the

¹ We possess two autobiographical memoirs of St. Margaret Mary. The first comprises various fragments written between 1673 and 1677 at the bidding of Mather de Saumaise, and relates especially the graces received during the third and fourth years of her religious life. In the second volume of *Vie et Oeuvres*, published by Msgr. Gauthey, edition of 1915, the *Mémoire* occupies forty-two pages (125-166). The other, written at the beginning of 1686, at the order of her director, Father Rolin, goes back to her childhood and youth in the world. Much more important than the first, it takes up eighty-nine pages (27-117) in the *Vie et Oeuvres*, and is frequently called the *Autobiography* par excellence. In our references in the following chapters, we shall designate the first of these *Mémoires*, for which we are indebted to Mother de Saumaise, *Autob. S*; the second, which we owe to Father Rolin, *Autob. R*.

convent. When the time came for her to make her profession, the Very Reverend Mother de Saumaise let the expiration of her novitiate pass, and for several months hesitated to admit her, until Margaret Mary cried in sorrow to heaven, "Alas, dear Lord, You will therefore be the cause of my being sent away." Like Jacob struggling with the angel, she resisted these divine advances . . . which were so suspect. Every means was tried to bring them to an end. A small donkey and her colt were chosen as accomplices. She was put in charge of them to prevent them from trampling the truck garden. . . . It would have been so simple to tether them! No, she was to watch them, chase after them all the day long until the evening *Angelus*. Thus, it was thought, she would regain her balance, and rid herself of these "pious hallucinations." It was an empty hope. In this running back and forth, Margaret Mary did not lose the "actual and continual" presence of her Beloved. "I was just as happy when evening came, as though I had passed the whole day in prayer before the Blessed Sacrament."² And yet, Mother Thouvant continued to tell her, sometimes even before her companions; "Your long prayers and extraordinary practices are a sign of pride and self-love, which are opposed to the ways of our institute."³

But what was she to do? God took possession of her so sensibly that even when alone in her cell it was almost impossible for her to remain seated. She stayed on her knees when she was not prostrate on the floor.

From the time of her novitiate Margaret Mary had received from heaven the special vocation of reparation. "I am seeking," Jesus had told her, "a victim for My Heart, who wishes to offer herself as a sacrifice of immolation for the accomplishment of my purposes. . . . No, don't look among your companions. I don't want any of them, but you, and I want you to consent to My wishes."⁴ A few days later,

² *Autob. R.*, Gt. II, 66 and 188.

³ Testimony of Sister Elizabeth de la Garde-Marsac, Gt. I, 541.

⁴ Gt. II, 561. For the chronology of these visions, rather difficult to establish because the Saint is rarely precise as to dates, we follow the very authoritative opinion of Father Auguste Hamon, in his *Vie de sainte Marguerite-Marie*, chaps. iii and iv. In a letter to Father Croiset, November 3, 1689, the Saint declares, in connection with the favors she has received from our Lord: "I

November 2, 1672: "Do you remember that it is a crucified God whom you wish to espouse? You must therefore make yourself like Him, and bid farewell to all the pleasures of life, since He does not wish you to have any that have not been run through with His cross."⁵

In the first months which followed Margaret Mary's profession, this appeal became more precise. While she was meditating on the agony of her Savior in the Garden of Olives, the place, Jesus told her, "where I suffered more interiorly than in all the rest of My Passion,"—she felt the holiness of God weigh heavily upon her, so heavily that she became incapable of praying. I felt "so great a despair and sorrow at appearing before my God that I would have wished a thousand times to be swallowed up, destroyed, annihilated . . . like a criminal waiting to be condemned."⁶ "There is nothing so painful," she confesses, "as the holiness of justice. The soul becomes like boiling oil which seeps into the very marrow of the bones and makes the body so insensible to all other pains that they seem rather a relief than a torture." It was then that "the presence of my Sovereign gave me such an impression of His purity that it was impossible for my soul to bear it. It would wish to be able to flee away and hide, but in vain. This God Who is full of love finds pleasure in seeing it in that condition and makes it find that which it runs away from."⁷

"This God who is full of love," the word ought to be remembered if one does not wish to go astray on the rigors of this holiness of justice. It is because He loves His creatures, formed in His own image, that God suffers at seeing them sullied. It was through love that Christ offered Himself first on Calvary as an expiation for them; and it is through love again that He asks all Christians, more especially chosen souls, to supply, as St. Paul puts it, what is lacking to His Passion. Now, behold how, in order the better to call attention to this law, in order to make its fulfillment easier, at the same time

cannot specify the time at which I think all these things took place, not knowing that I would ever be obliged to talk about them" (II, 580 ff.).

⁵ *Autob. S.*, Gt. II, 128.

⁶ *Autob. S.*, Gt. II, 162 ff.

⁷ *Autob. S.*, Gt. II, 144; cf. II, 75.

that He wins Margaret Mary's consent to become a sacrifice of immolation, Jesus fills her with His most consoling favors. "Stop, O dear God," she cries, "stop these torrents which engulf me, or enlarge my capacity to receive them."⁸ At the same time that He makes known the demands of justice, He begins to reveal to her the sovereign symbol of His love, the heart of God made man.

At the time of her retreat for profession, about All Saints of 1672, she heard our Lord declare to her: "Behold the wound in My side, and make your dwelling there now and forever."⁹ A little later, "in the highest point of the understanding," she saw the heart of Jesus "more brilliant than the sun, which drew her own, black and disfigured," and united it with His own in a way that was indescribable. "Be careful never to leave it," He told her.¹⁰

But this was nothing yet. One day, on the feast of St. John the Evangelist, doubtless in 1673, our Lord "made me rest for a very long time on His divine breast, where He revealed to me the unutterable secrets of His Sacred Heart, which He had kept hidden up to then." And that "in a way so effective and perceptible," that despite the habitual fear which the saintly nun had of being deceived, Jesus left her "no room for doubt." He told her: "My divine heart is so impassioned with love for men, and for you in particular, that not being able to contain the flames of its burning charity, it must spread them by means of you and make itself manifest to men so as to enrich them out of its precious treasures. . . . I have chosen you as an abyss of unworthiness and of ignorance for the accomplishment of this great design, to the end that all shall be done by Me." Jesus then took her heart, which He "placed in His adorable breast . . . a tiny atom which was consumed in this flaming furnace, from which He drew it forth like a brilliant flame, and gave it back to me with the words: 'To prove to you that this grace is not a bit of imagination, this pain will remain with you always, even though I have closed the wound in your side.'" ¹¹ And thus it happened. As an effect of

⁸ *Contemp.*, Gt. I, 83.

⁹ *Contemp.*, Gt. I, 92.

¹⁰ *Contemp.*, Gt. I, 109. Today we should say: "*Prends garde d'en jamais sortir.*" (The text has it, *Prends garde de n'en jamais sortir.*)

¹¹ *Autob. R.*, Gt. II, 69 ff.

the emotional experiences undergone in this vision, Margaret Mary remained for a number of days unable to utter a word, useless for the most common acts, so much so that some of the religious shrugged their shoulders and called her witless. Others, without a thought as to whether their talk reached the ears of the young boarders, went so far as to speak of her as a hypocrite and visionary.¹²

From that time, each first Friday of the month, the heart of Jesus revealed itself to the saint ever more clearly. In the beginning of 1674, it appeared to her "more radiant than the sun . . . surrounded by a crown of thorns which symbolized the wounds which our sins inflicted on it, and surmounted by a cross to signify that the cross was planted there from the first instant of His incarnation."

What impels the Savior thus to make Himself known and to wish to be honored "under the symbol of this heart of flesh," is "the ardent desire He has to be loved by men." And He promises that "wherever this image is exposed He will there pour out His graces and blessings." This devotion, He assures her, is "like a last effort of His love which wishes, in these last ages to be propitious to men in order to draw them away from the rule of Satan."¹³

And yet, the more ardent this love is the more sensitive is this heart "to the ingratitude and disregard" of men. In the course of this year, 1674, He begins to complain of receiving only coldness and rebuffs in return for His eagerness to do them good. A "substitute reparation is imperative. But before seeking it of all the faithful, He claims it from her, His chosen one. Before making her His messenger to the whole world, He confirms her in her role of victim. "I will be your strength. Fear nothing: but be attentive to My voice." A solemn prelude which recalls certain stirring warnings of Holy Scripture, when God wished to draw the attention of Israel to more particular or more important commands. And Jesus specifies how Margaret Mary is to "prepare herself" for her task of reparation.

"First, you will receive Me in holy communion as often as obedience permits, and because of this you will suffer some mortifications and humiliations. . . . In addition, you will communicate the first

¹² Testimony of Sister Catherine Billet de Saint-Xavier, Gt. I, 558.

¹³ Fourth Letter to Père Croiset, Gt. II, 567 ff.

Friday of each month. Every Thursday to Friday night I will make you share in the mortal sadness which I experienced in the Garden of Olives, and, in a way you will not be able to understand, this will reduce you to a kind of agony harder to bear than death. To accompany Me in this humble prayer, which amidst all My anguish I will then present to My Father, you will rise between eleven and midnight to be prostrate with Me for an hour, your face to the earth, as much to appease the divine wrath in asking mercy for sinners, as to sweeten in some measure the bitterness I felt in being abandoned by My apostles." He ended with this caution: "Satan is rabid to deceive you. That is why you must do nothing without the approval of your guides. . . . Satan has no power over those who are obedient." ¹⁴

The prolonged prayer of Margaret Mary on the day of this vision surprised her companions more than ever. When they came to call her back and lead her to Mother de Saumaise, she "no longer knew where she was, and was quite beside herself." Although her daughter on her knees before her was all atremble, the superior wishing to try her did all she could to mortify and humiliate her. Margaret Mary, despite her "extreme confusion," delivered her message nevertheless, and Mother de Saumaise, without this time granting the requests of our Lord, treated all that was reported to her with nothing but contempt. "This was a great consolation to me," declared the Saint, "and I went away in great peace." A violent fever ensued, however, in which there were more than sixty attacks, so that her death was feared. "Very well," the superior ordered, "ask God to cure you. We will then know whether all this comes from the Spirit of God. Then I will permit the first Friday communion, the holy hour on Thursday evening, everything." ¹⁵ As a matter of fact, the invalid recovered her health following an apparition of the Blessed Virgin.

Since the "sovereign Spirit Who was working" in Margaret Mary, prevented her from having in her thoughts "other occupation than that which He gave her," she continued for all that in a strange fear

¹⁴ *Autob. R.*, Gt. II, 71 ff.

¹⁵ *Autob. R.*, Gt. II, 72-75.

of being misled.¹⁶ Perplexed in her guidance of her daughter, Mother de Saumaise thought that she should oblige her to reveal to some men of learning what was taking place in her. Some of them treated her as a visionary and forbade her to think about her inspirations.¹⁷ One, perhaps Jean Bouzitat, the illegitimate prior of the "Ancients" of the deanery, delivered himself of this noble advice: "Give the girl some soup to eat, and everything will improve." The wiser among them did not know what to think, and suspended judgment.

Father Pierre Papon, superior of the Jesuits, was, it would seem, of these latter. He was a man all of one piece, frank, to the point of brusqueness and better fitted to handle the consciences of merchants and soldiers than nuns. He had qualities for governing, however, and when he learned in the beginning of 1675 that there was talk of sending him to the college of Gray as superior, he did not conceal from Father de la Chaize, then provincial of Lyons, the difficulties that his successor would have to contend with at Paray. As the result of previous consultations, the case of Sister Alacoque had become the talk of the town, and there was nothing to prevent the provincial's being informed. He would thus be helped in his choice of a successor to Father Papon. It was a very delicate choice indeed. But Father de la Chaize as La Colombière's superior now for nearly four years, knew the inner workings of the father's soul, thanks to his accounts of conscience, and must have thought: Here is the very man. We can thus explain the remark, so frequently quoted, of a Jesuit of Paray-le-Monial, Father Forest, to Marie-Rosalie de Lyonne. She had ex-

¹⁶ *Autob. R.*, Gt. II, 77; cf. I, 132.

¹⁷ *Contemp.*, Gt. I, 132, and Languet, *op. cit.* 124, 233. It is quite possible that in 1678 Mother Greyfié, who was superior after Mother de Saumaise, seeing the feelings of the community still divided on the subject of Margaret Mary, wished to consult once more some learned priests. But the Contemporaries and Msgr. Languet clearly bear witness that there had first been a consultation in 1674. To make sure of it, the former have their own recollections. They were sufficiently shrewd not to confuse what happened *before* or *after* the coming of Father La Colombière. As to Languet, the seventeen years he spent on the biography of Margaret Mary had supplied him with enough oral testimony or writings to form a solidly motivated opinion. Is it not, then, surprising that all the biographers of the Saint, following the old authors, have placed the consultation of "persons of learning" in 1674?

pressed surprise that a man of such merit should be sent to so small a town, and Father Forest observed: "It is in behalf of a choice soul who has need of his guidance."¹⁸

In fact, we can easily guess the agony to which the advice of men of learning had reduced the soul of Margaret Mary. "They began," she wrote, "to tell me that it was the devil who was the author of all that happened to me, and that he would destroy me by his snares and illusions, if I were not on my guard."¹⁹

How could she forget that a similar situation a hundred years earlier had awakened the same doubts in a convent at Avila? When Teresa, at the order of her confessor, sought the advice of other priests whom she calls "great servants of God," "as they loved me very much," she declares, "they had only the more fear of seeing me deceived by the devil. . . . They in turn consulted others on what I had told them about my prayer. In spite of their good intentions they caused me a great deal of trouble, for they divulged things which should have remained hidden and which I was getting ready to make known myself. One day they met together to the number of five or six. My confessor came to tell me on their part that all without exception thought me the plaything of the demon. . . . I began to tremble so much with fear that I did not dare to remain alone, not even in full daylight."²⁰

Margaret Mary had similar anxieties. Her suffering became even outwardly visible. When "I was sent to the infirmary . . . the devil frequently made me fall and break whatever I had in my hands. He then made fun of me, sometimes laughing right in my face: 'Oh, you lump, you'll never do anything worth while.' This threw me into such sadness and depression of spirits that I didn't know what to do. For frequently he deprived me of the power of telling our Mother."²¹ Instead of sympathizing with her in her trouble, a large part of the community, relying on the disapproval of the priests who had been consulted, blamed the Saint openly. And to drive out the evil spirit

¹⁸ *Contemp.*, Gt. I, 139.

¹⁹ *Autob. R.*, Gt. II, 89.

²⁰ *Histoire de sainte Thérèse d'après les Bollandistes*, I, 141.

²¹ *Autob. R.*, Gt. II, 80.

some of the more fervent stealthily threw holy water at her, making the sign of the cross and saying other prayers.”²²

One day when, according to advice she had received, she was setting up a very stout resistance, but quite in vain, to the spirit Who ruled her, she was filled more than ever with the divine presence and received this promise: “I will send you my faithful servant and perfect friend who will teach you to know Me and abandon yourself to Me.”²³

Some time after that, towards the end of February 1675, Father La Colombière made his first visit to the convent. Behind the grille of the parlor, Mother de Saumaise presented the community to him. He had become their extraordinary confessor to succeed Father Papon. While he was addressing a few edifying words to the sisters, “I understood interiorly these words,” writes the Saint: “This is he whom I am sending you.” I recognized this soon after in the ember days confession.”²⁴

These words enable us to fix the date of the first meeting between La Colombière and Margaret Mary. That year the ember days fell on the sixth, eighth, and ninth of March.

From talk that was current the father already knew that at the convent there was a religious whose extraordinary ways had her superiors in a flutter of excitement. He could have picked her out in the obscurity of the confessional. When Jesus is in full possession of a soul, it is useless for her to shut herself up in the silence of her enclosed garden; the mystery is always revealed. “Without ever having seen each other or spoken before,” Margaret Mary recounts, “he kept me a long time and spoke as though he understood what was going on within me. But I didn’t want to open my heart this time, and as he saw that I wished to go for fear of inconveniencing the community, he told me that if I wished he would come to see me another time to speak with me in the same place. But my natural timidity, which made me afraid of all these communications, made me answer him that as it didn’t depend on me, I would do whatever obedience

²² *Autob. R.*, Gt. II, 88.

²³ Third Letter to Father Croiset, Gt. II, 541; *Autob. R.*, Gt. II, 91.

²⁴ *Autob. R.*, Gt. II, 92; *Contemp.*, Gt. I, 133.

required of me. I then withdrew after having remained about an hour and a half.”²⁵

“I did not want to open my heart.” We must well understand the remark. She means doubtless a sharing of confidences concerning the demands of Jesus who was calling her to assume the role of victim, or certainly of those concerning the Sacred Heart. But two such souls could not have prolonged their conversation for an hour and a half just to say nothing.

During this same period, but according to the account of the contemporaries *after* the confession, the father came to give the community the ember days conference, in the chapel this time and before the grille of the choir. The black muslin curtain was drawn back. Very soon, one of his hearers, “like a person in whom he discovered something extraordinary,” caught his attention by her air of recollection. After the instruction, “he felt obliged to ask the superior who that young religious was.” Mother de Saumaise having given her name as Sister Margaret Mary, Claude declared without hesitation, “She is a soul of grace.”²⁶ Thus he began to bear witness to the light.

The father well understood, however, that the “enclosed garden” was only half opened. Was it timidity? reserve? Perhaps, but still more the difficulty of expressing divine communications so delicate and so complex in human speech, which ran the risk of falsifying them. Besides, in spite of the “unalterable peace” which usually reigned in the heart of Margaret Mary, he guessed that she was ill at ease and harassed about a number of points, and determined to do everything he could to restore her confidence by bringing her, as God’s minister, the words that would enlighten and reassure her.

On her part, the Saint knew that “the Sovereign Master wished her to make known” to this faithful servant “all the secrets of His Sacred Heart,” which He had entrusted to her.²⁷ Mother de Saumaise had also “ordered” her daughter to withhold nothing from Father La Colombière.²⁸ “However,” wrote Margaret Mary when “shortly after”

²⁵ *Autob. R. Gt. II*, 92.

²⁶ *Contemp.*, Gt. I, 133.

²⁷ *Autob. R.*, Gt. II, 91.

²⁸ *Contemp.*, Gt. I, 133.

(doubtless towards the middle of March), "he returned, even though I knew it to be God's will that I speak with him, I did not cease to find it frightfully repugnant to do so." Her first word with him was to admit it, but the father answered at once: "I am very glad to have given you the occasion of making a sacrifice for God."

That was frankness on both sides. But the ice was broken. "Then without fuss or difficulty, I opened the depths of my soul to him, all the bad as well as the good. He gave me great consolation by assuring me that there was nothing to be afraid of in the guidance of this Spirit, as long as it did not draw me away from obedience; that I must follow His movements, and surrender my whole being to Him that He might sacrifice and immolate me according to His good pleasure. Admiring the great goodness of our God for not having repulsed me in the midst of so much resistance, he taught me to have a high opinion of God's gifts, and with respect and humility to accept these frequent communications and familiar interviews with which He favored me, and for which I ought to give unending thanks for so great a goodness."²⁹

Finding in these words a wonderful echo to the feelings of humility by which she was completely possessed, the Saint henceforth found no trouble in questioning him on a point which disquieted her, an impotence which frequently has caused scruples to other persons favored with mystical experiences. "This Sovereign of my soul pursued me so closely, without any regard for time or place, that I was unable to pray vocally. I resisted Him, doing great violence to myself, remaining sometimes open-mouthed, powerless to utter a single word, especially when saying the rosary." It is useless to struggle like that, answered her director. Be satisfied with the prayers you must say according to your rule, "and add the beads when you can."

Feeling at last that she was fully understood, the privileged friend of the divine heart, disclosed "something of the more special endear-

²⁹ *Autob. R.*, Gt. II, 92-93. Also, all that follows to the end of the chapter. It was to this second conversation that what the Saint said to Father Croiset in her third letter is to be referred: "Without any premeditation I told him all that had happened to me, and all the graces I had received from my Sovereign, in the simple manner that He taught me" (Gt. II, 542).

ments and the loving union she received from her well-beloved." The "faithful servant and perfect friend" of Christ listened, and where another director would not yet have known the way, passed judgment in the strength of his own experience, by giving a firm and tranquil approval, seeing in all that he heard the stamp of the divine. He only added, so the Saint tells us, "that in all this I had great reason for humbling myself, and he for admiring the great mercy of God in my regard."

This was the second important interview between these privileged souls, the record of which Margaret Mary consigned to her spiritual notes. But the divine goodness, she admits, did not wish me to receive any joy "without paying a good price in humiliations." This communication "drew a great number of them on him, and he himself had much to suffer because of me. For, people said that I wanted to deceive him by my illusions and mislead him like the others."

St. Teresa tells us that Father Balthasar Alvarez had to suffer a thousand criticisms because of her, for a similar reason—petty trials that are the inevitable price men have to pay for the undeniable advantages of life in the cloister.

For the moment at least Claude had no knowledge of these annoyances. A few weeks before Easter, he left to give a mission in the neighborhood of *La Bénissons-Dieu*. Leaving Paray-le-Monial, he carried a great hope in the depth of his heart, the vision, still dim, but full of promise, of a new light which was being announced to the world.

The Monastery of the Bénissons-Dieu

SITUATED at the northernmost point of Forez, the Abbey of the Bénissons-Dieu was on the confines of three provinces, Lyons, Bourgogne, and Bourbonnais. The ancient church, and the village which surrounds it, are today part of the arrondissement of Roanne. Its history presents this peculiarity: founded in 1138 by St. Bernard for his monks, it became in 1611 a convent of nuns, through the whim of a powerful lord of Forez, father of a family and a greedy and affectionate despot.

Philibert, Marquis de Nérestang, "Grand-Master of the Military Orders of Mount-Carmel and of Saint-Lazare, Counsellor of the King, Commander of the Royal Scots Guards, Captain of a hundred cuirassiers, camp-master in an infantry regiment," had obtained many ecclesiastical benefices from Henry IV in 1602, in return for his good and loyal services. In the number was the Abbey de Mégemont in Auvergne, then occupied by the religious of Cîteaux. He placed his eldest daughter, Françoise, who was not yet twelve, in charge.

In 1610 he obtained the patent for the Bénissons-Dieu, but this time for his son. And immediately "a great plan of exchange" took possession of his mind. This monastery, which was built in a milder climate than that of Mégemont, in a valley which was "protected on the north and south by hills covered with woods, and open at the west and east by the expanse of a long plain, watered by a river that was well stocked with fish," appealed to him as an ideal home for women. There, accordingly, he installed his daughter, the young Abbess, his father's heart finding in addition the consolation of having her nearer the family domain in Forez. The following year, after a visit from the

Abbot of Clairvaux, Denys l'Argentier, who prepared the exchange, the transfer was carried out.

Françoise de Nérestang lived more than forty years at the Bénissons-Dieu, a model of prayer and austerity. "She took a marvelous pleasure," says her biographer, "in spending part of the night gazing at the heavens and the stars, and contemplating in these beautiful celestial bodies the greatness and perfection of the divine Spirit who created them, while the religious who accompanied her took their repose in sleep."

At her death, her sister Aymare, who had served as her assistant for many long years, succeeded her, but, according to the same author, she survived her only five days. Françoise II de Nérestang, then twenty-three years of age was named by the king to succeed her aunts.

Born at the Bénissons-Dieu, where her mother made frequent visits, she was consecrated to God early in life and destined for the cloister. While still very young, she felt a lively attraction for the book of the *Imitation of Jesus Christ*, and at an age when most people can hardly understand it, she found her delight in it. Struck in her sixth year with a painful illness, which subsequently made numerous operations necessary, she preserved a character that was high-souled in supporting suffering and sensitive to sympathize with others. Fashioned by nature to be loved, the yoke which her authority as abbess imposed on her appeared sweet to her and the burdens light.

She was deeply concerned about her spiritual responsibilities, and in 1671 made an offer to the college at Roanne to support the Jesuits who should come "during Lent to give missions in the surrounding territory which was dependent on the Bénissons-Dieu." The offer was accepted, and a short time later a permanent mission was founded which the Jesuits undertook "to give punctually every three years."

It was for the purpose of beginning this ministry that Claude presented himself at the Bénissons-Dieu towards the middle of March, 1675. To know how he acquitted himself of the task, it is enough to go back to the details which he had to give some months later in his funeral sermon over Françoise de Nérestang. The description is clearly that of an eye-witness:

You have heard speak of these missions which have been renewed in our days and with such success, especially in this kingdom. A number of apostolic preachers gather in a city, or even in a village, with the purpose of banishing all disorder and rekindling fervor. They come, armed by our bishops with ample powers to absolve all kinds of cases, even those that are reserved. To begin with, a plenary indulgence is published for all who wish to profit from their labor. Then, for the space of about a month, they preach three or four times a day. Their subject matter is all that is most terrifying, all that is most consoling, in the truths of the faith. During all this time the Blessed Sacrament is exposed. Benediction is given after each sermon, all the rest of the day being spent in various public exercises which are all most profitable. Morning and evening prayers are recited aloud in the church. The uninstructed are helped to make interior acts during Mass, corresponding to the mysteries which it represents. Frequent instruction is given on the sacrament of penance, on holy communion, on the preparation for death, on all the commandments, on all obligations both general and particular. It is like a long retreat, which is made at once for a whole population to dispose it to receive the fullness of the Spirit of God. The fruits of these holy exercises cannot be appreciated except by those who gather them. They are like torrential fires which consume all vices, which change, purify, renew all things. In fifteen days, we see whole villages pass from gross ignorance to a very perfect knowledge of God. We count as many as eight or nine hundred general confessions in villages where there are no more than a thousand communicants. Whole villages, completely divided by faction and inhuman enmities see peace restored by very sincere reconciliations. There is no more talk about dances or wine-shops, and instead of blasphemies, oaths, and ribald songs, hymns are heard everywhere. The use of the sacraments, of meditation, or mortification, interior and exterior, becomes common. If I said all that I have seen in this matter, I am sure that I should not be believed, even on my word. I could hardly believe even my own eyes and ears.¹

We, at least, can believe the narrator. He was a man of exquisite modesty, and when he relates experiences in which he has taken part, he is not the man to embellish them.

Did La Colombière prolong his preaching beyond Easter? Did he return there in May to give new missions in the neighborhood of the

¹ *Oeuvres* IV, 468-70.

Bénissons-Dieu? We have no authority for thinking that he did. It was for the "time of Lent" that the abbess had asked for the missions. Moreover, in the country the month of May, because of the demands of farmwork, is not a favorable time for frequent church gatherings.

If the father was not present at the death of Madame de Nérestang, which took place on May 21, he came to the Bénissons-Dieu to pass a few days there, doubtless at the time of her funeral, for the purpose either of alleviating the grief felt at the loss of an illustrious superior, or to gather the necessary information for the funeral sermon of the fortieth day. He tells us, in fact, that he had questioned her fellow-novices about the dead abbess, and that he was "accurately informed." He was instructed about the various virtues which, "in a very eminent degree," were practiced in the convent.² And even if he did not say so, the numerous details which he gave about the inner life of this "virtuous and incomparable woman," would be enough to prove that he had had prolonged interviews. He knew of her "marvelous love" of the Holy Eucharist, her devotion to the holy sacrifice of the Mass and Holy Communion, her charity towards "the orphans, widows and the old." He knew that with the "help of her surgeon she informed herself as to whether there were any sick in the country, and obliged him to go to see them and to report to her on their condition." They told him of all her ailments. And although "we have in France baths the use of which would have been very good for her," "and that a change of air would have been a sovereign remedy," she never wished that "her example should serve as a pretext for lax and restless religious to leave their convent."³ The abbess had a passionate love of pious discourses and "every day received a poor shepherd because she found in him a great knowledge of God joined with a great simplicity." The father also heard her praised for the care she took to try candidates, and to choose them without any thought of the size of their dowry. They even told him of "the last words she uttered," and the humble and tender words with which, on her deathbed, "she asked the forgiveness of all her good daughters."⁴

² *Oeuvres* IV, 462, 479, 482.

³ *Oeuvres* IV, 463-75.

⁴ *Ibid.*, IV, 483-87.

The history of the Bénissons-Dieu offers one particular on the subject of the devotion to the Sacred Heart, which could not fully escape Father La Colombière, and to which it is important to call attention.

Shortly after the death of the first abbess of the convent, in 1653, some recollections of the venerated deceased appeared, which had been gathered by a Recollect, her director, Father Chérubin de Marcigny, under the title, *Monument dressé à la mémoire éternelle de Mme. Soeur Françoise de Nérestang*. It was an edifying life, very much like those numerous abbesses, who at the dawn of the seventeenth century reformed convents which had been ruined by the wars of religion. Fortunately the author had added to the biography of the abbess, in an appendix of eighty pages, the *saintes reliques de ses pensées*. "She had composed this book merely to help her devotion, never having been willing to let any one see it, because she reserved her secret for her heavenly Spouse."

This secret was nothing more than a rather penetrating study which bore witness to a lively love of the Incarnate Word. Among the books of preference which the foundress read, Father Chérubin calls attention, along with the works of St. Teresa, to those of two Jesuits, the *Méditations* of the Venerable Louis Dupont, and the treatises of Father Saint-Jure. Taken together with her direct contact with the Gospels, and without having recourse to the influence of authors of the French school, Berulle, Condren, or Olier, that suffices to explain the fact that the "elevations" and prayers of this little work constitute something of a mystical treatise on the Incarnation. More especially unusual, there are certain pages which manifest an ardent devotion towards the heart of Jesus. The pious abbess, after the example of her father, St. Bernard, even then found in this heart a refuge against temptations, a retreat in which to repent, a spur to penance, a model of perfect generosity.⁵

⁵ The *Vitis Mystica* which is the inspiration of the following lines was then attributed to St. Bernard. Today, at least for the passages which interest us, it is thought to be St. Bonaventure's. These passages are well known. In the old office of the Sacred Heart, the Church had chosen some of them as lessons for the second nocturne; in the new office they appear in the homily of the third nocturne.

As I am very sure of having access to your heart, since it is there that the charity you have for us is lodged, permit me to make it my retreat and my abode. Permit me to enter into this generous and pitying heart, as in the place of my refuge, to flee and be saved from my cruel enemies, who seek to take me by surprise in order to destroy me. And they will infallibly succeed if you refuse me admittance. But, my sweet Savior, you have wished to have your sacred side opened so that we should have an open door to enter and remain with you. You have seen to it that it was love rather than the spear that pierced it, so that we might find a lodging in it and a protection from all the perils and persecutions of the world and of hell.

I am coming therefore with confidence and reverence, to enter into this protecting heart, never to leave it, since out of it there is no safety, no pleasure on earth. It is there that I wish to consider, examine and bewail my sins, and ask pardon of your divine Majesty: in this loving heart which of old suffered so unutterable a disappointment and has been pierced by such extreme pain. It is in this Sacred Heart, infinitely holy and marvelously pure, and which has a horror of the slightest imperfections, that I wish to hate all of mine, even the least, that I wish to combat all my ill-regulated passions, and to resist bravely all the assaults of my enemies, in the hope of winning a glorious victory under the protection of this unassailable fortress.

I will live happy in this heart which has been so afflicted for me, in my mortifications and penances, and in all my annoyances, afflictions, aridities, weariness, and contradictions. It will be here, too, that I will suffer without complaint all the pains of death by reminding myself that this generous heart was for love of me filled with weariness and sadness at the time of your bitter passion, without uttering a murmur of complaint.

It is in this Sacred Heart that I renew the absolute gift that I have made of myself, my dear Master, of my soul, of my body, and of all their faculties and operations, and that I surrender myself absolutely to you, my adorable Redeemer, in an entire dependence, of all that I am, and of all that I am likely to do. I protest that I wish eternally to act according to the inclinations of your heart, to follow its counsels, to conform to its desires, to enter into its interests and to be transformed into its affections.

It is not at all unlikely that Father La Colombière had some acquaintance with these pages. Providence could have inspired them

to prepare him for the revelations which before long were to be more completely entrusted to him.

 15

The Message of the Sacred Heart

IT was only natural that after Lent Father Claude should return to Paray-le-Monial without delay. Could he leave his little community without direction for any length of time, especially in the very beginning of his term of office? Our Savior was awaiting him there to continue His instructions on His plans concerning His Sacred Heart.

During his absence, Margaret Mary had become aware of a fair amount of criticism in her regard, noticing at times significant shakings of the head even among the wiser members of the community. To some extent at least, her frankness was somewhat to blame. Unable to "restrain the lively effects of love" produced in her soul by "the continual graces of her Savior," "I tried," she admits, "to spread them abroad by word and writing under the impression that others receiving the same graces would share the same thoughts. But in this I was undeceived not only by the Reverend Father La Colombière, but by the humiliations and persecutions which my efforts drew upon me."¹ "I was regarded as a visionary whose head had been turned

¹ Fourth Letter to Father Croiset (Gt. II, 569). It has been thought that the "persecutions" to which the Saint here alludes were exaggerated somewhat by Msgr. Languet in his *Vie de Marguerite-Marie*. The correspondence between François Bottu du Saint-Fonds and Laurent Dugas, of which we speak in Chapter 5, relates that when this biography was read publicly at Paray, there were some violent protestations on this precise point (Letter of June 13, 1738). To avoid every appearance of dispute we shall omit in this chapter borrowing anything from the narrative of Languet. All the details which we offer, details which are necessary if we are to appreciate the holiness of Margaret Mary and the courage of her director, are taken either from the writings of the Saint, or from the depositions of eye-witnesses, given under oath in the process of beatification.

by her fancies and illusions.”² Some of the sisters, moved by pity, continued piously to throw holy water on her.

We can understand that in order to test her daughter, Mother de Saumaise had “fed her abundantly on the delicious bread of mortification and humiliation.” In return for this privileged treatment, the Saint “only loved her the more.” But others did not have the same rights. In vain did her sovereign Lord tell her: “I do you great honor in employing such noble instruments to crucify you. My Eternal Father delivered Me into the hands of pitiless and cruel executioners . . . ; and in regard to you I make use of those who are consecrated and devoted to Me, and for whose salvation I wish you to offer all that they shall make you suffer.” In vain did Margaret Mary answer that “she did so with all her heart,”³ she could not prevent such attitudes from being the occasion of numerous faults against humility and charity. And it was now two years since St. Francis de Sales gave her to understand that these infractions were against virtues that were so dear to him that they grieved him beyond measure.⁴ The holy founder frequently repeated this complaint. “There is a community,” he told her some time later, “which causes me a great deal of pain; a third of them I do not acknowledge.”⁵

Was it not because of similar violations of rule that our Lord at different times made known “His just anger” to Margaret Mary? “See, here is this religious who is one in name only. I am ready to vomit her from my heart and leave her to herself.”⁶ Another day: “While preparing for Holy Communion I heard a voice which said: ‘See, my daughter, the ill treatment I receive from this soul who is coming to receive Me. She has renewed all the sufferings of My passion!’”⁷ Or again, “Once when I was accompanying the Blessed Sacrament, which was being brought to a sick sister, I perceived that amazing kindness turn away, and say to him who was carrying Him: ‘Stop forcing Me, I am suffering violence!’”⁸

² *Autob. R.*, Gt. II, 96.

³ *Autob. R.*, Gt. II, 97.

⁴ *Autob. S.*, Gt. II, 139.

⁵ *Autob. S.*, Gt. II, 156.

⁶ *Autob. R.*, Gt. II, 106.

⁷ *Autob. S.*, Gt. II, 147.

⁸ *Autob. S.*, Gt. II, 153.

All that the Saint did or did not do became matter for criticism. If pressed by our Lord who drew her irresistibly to the tabernacle, she prolonged her adoration in choir, she was accused of "wishing to appear singular."⁹ If in work hours "she retired to a little corner to be nearer the Blessed Sacrament," "they kept nagging her."¹⁰ Out of a love for peace she resolved to remain in her cell. It was then that her Sovereign told her with some vexation in His voice: "I want you to know that if you withdraw from My presence, I will make you suffer for it, and all of those who are responsible."

On each of these occurrences, Margaret Mary took her role of reparatrix literally and interceded for the guilty with some animation. We might think that we were present at the stirring intercessions of Moses in behalf of the chosen people. "Having once shown me the punishment He once wished to inflict on some souls, I threw myself at His feet: 'O my Savior, turn all your anger against me, and blot me out of the book of life rather than lose these souls which have cost you so dear.' He answered: 'But they do not love you, and they will not stop annoying you.' 'No matter, dear God, if only they love You. I will not cease begging You to forgive them.' 'Let Me be, I cannot bear with them any longer.' And embracing Him even more intensely, 'No, my Savior, I will not let you be until You have forgiven them.' It was then He said to me: 'Very well, if you are willing to answer for them.' 'Yes, dear God, but I can never pay You except with Your own gifts, which are the treasures of Your Sacred Heart.'"¹¹

The day was to come when even the Blessed Virgin, although she had undertaken the defense of her children against the anger of her Son, presented herself "quite worn out, holding in her hands hearts that are filled with wounds and filth." "As the *Salve* was being recited in the chapel, at the words, "Advocata nostra," she answered: "Yes, my daughters, I am so in fact, but I would be so much more willingly if you had been willing to be faithful to my Son."¹²

At the process of beatification in 1715, which was held by the

⁹ *Autob. S.*, Gt. II, 146.

¹⁰ *Autob. S.*, Gt. II, 165.

¹¹ *Autob. R.*, Gt., II, 107 ff.

¹² *Autob. S.*, Gt. II, 170.

ecclesiastical tribunal, the survivors of these painful days were called on to make known their recollections. Many spoke like Sister Damas de Barnay, attesting on oath, "that several times she was present at recreations with the said Sister Alacoque, when she was treated as a visionary, a hypocrite, as obstinate in her views and devotions." Or, like Sister Rosselin, who affirmed that "she knew that the said Sister Alacoque had suffered all possible contempt, contradictions, rebuffs, insults, reproaches, all without complaint, while she prayed for those by whom she was ill treated." Or again, like Sister Claude-Marguerite Billet, who testified that "being with her while others, who were at a distance, affected in loud terms to blame her and slander her cruelly, she said to this deponent who wished to move away out of hearing of this wicked talk: 'My dear sister, if only you knew how sweet it is to suffer for Jesus Christ!'"¹³

Some of these affronts and the heavenly visitations which followed them, are undoubtedly later than May, 1675. But the state of mind which they reveal was deep set at the monastery at that time. They would have no innovations, and this was the order of the day even among the most fervent. Was it to be put up with that a young religious, just professed, by making herself singular, should appear to read a lesson to her elders and pose as a reformer? We can imagine the complication which Father La Colombière had to unravel on his return from the Bénissons-Dieu.

By taking sides with the saintly religious he very soon understood that in the eyes of many he was running the risk of lessening his reputation for wisdom and prudence. Would the success of his apostolate be impaired? "I was very much surprised," declared Margaret Mary, "that he did not give me up just as others had; for (and it is her charity towards her sisters no less than her humility which makes her speak so) the way I behaved toward him would have repelled any one else."¹⁴ Indeed? But had not Claude himself written: "If the whole earth were to revolt against me, make sport of me, complain, blame me, I would have to do all that God inspired me to do for His greater glory. I have promised it, and with God's grace I hope to

¹³ *Gt. I*, 515, 517, 521.

¹⁴ *Autob. R.*, *Gt. II*, 93.

fulfill it." Or again: "It is not in the eyes of men that I want to make my way."¹⁵

What is more, during this Paschal season, our Lord was going to make His wishes more clearly known to him, and by introducing him in a more and more intimate manner to the mysteries of love, to prepare him to receive without too much surprise a share in the secret of the great revelations He was planning.

"One morning, when father had come to the Visitation to say Mass," wrote Margaret Mary, "our Lord gave him, and me, some very great graces. For when I approached to receive communion, He showed me His Sacred Heart like a burning furnace and two others which were going to be united with it and lost in that abyss, saying: 'It is thus that My pure love unites these three hearts for ever.'" Jesus thus gave her to understand that her union with Father La Colombière "was all for the glory of His Sacred Heart." "He also wished," she adds, "that I lay bare to him the treasures of this heart, so that he would come to know it, and make its worth and value known to all. For that reason He wished that we be like brother and sister, with an equal share of spiritual blessings." But when Margaret Mary offered as an objection her "poverty and the inequality there was between a man of such great virtue and a poor sinner like herself," Jesus answered her: "The infinite riches of My heart will make up for all, and make all equal. Only tell him, and don't be afraid."

The humble Visitandine had just begun to suspect, and not without a shudder, that Christ wished to entrust her with a mission. She was not to be the only one to benefit from these lights with which He was favoring her. She was to pass them on, so that God "would be glorified in souls." "You will distribute them whether by word of mouth or by writing, as I shall let you know My wish." It was vain for Jesus to add that she should not "trouble herself about what she should thus say or write, because He would Himself add the unction of His grace." How could such a prospect appear to a poor, cloistered religious to be anything but the wildest dream? To have been chosen as the confidant of such wonderful secrets was already amazing enough. But to become their messenger! Would it not be an illusion

¹⁵ *Long Retreat*, 25, 80.

merely to think of it, rashness, mad folly? Yes, indeed, if she were alone. But the "faithful servant and perfect friend" of Christ is there. "Speak to him without fear." "I did so," says Margaret Mary, "at our first meeting. And the humble and thankful way in which he received it, together with several other things which I told him on the part of my sovereign Master, which had reference to himself, touched me, and did me more good than all the sermons I might have been able to hear."¹⁶

Thus, for the first time, the Saint was induced to speak of her revelations concerning the Sacred Heart. Until then, she had kept them secret, even from her superiors. "I tell you," she wrote very clearly to Father Croiset, "it is to this good father that I first mentioned them, as I had been bidden to do by my sovereign Lord."¹⁷ We imagine that the director was not willing then and there to promise his co-operation in such an adventure.

On one point, however, Claude that day was quick to draw the line. In the Old Testament God frequently bade His prophets go and warn transgressors of the law to see that they were heedful of the severities of His justice. A similar role, for some time now, seemed to be confided to Margaret Mary, in behalf of her community. In this new Sinai there were faults which, under other circumstances, might have appeared as negligible as dust, but which took on in God's eyes an unbearable gravity; faults so wounding to the "holiness of His justice," that in two years time, in spite of the burst of fervor occasioned by the short stay of Father La Colombière, they drew down upon the community a reprimand from heaven, which was the occasion of a most painful scene. Urged to "write and deliver certain notes" which warned the guilty, Margaret Mary resisted, because of the "great humiliations which would come upon her," and she preferred to offer to suffer in silence, as we have seen, the punishment merited by others. And she suffered from her resistance. Claude bade

¹⁶ *Autob. R.*, Gt. II, 93-94. The Saint clearly places the conversation which follows *after* the vision of the three hearts and as though a result of this vision. We are surprised that Father Hamon has reversed this order (*Vie.* 177-81).

¹⁷ Third Letter to Father Croiset, Gt. II, 543.

her never oppose the "holy suggestions of this Spirit." "No matter what pain and humiliation she might suffer," she ought "to say simply what she had been told and give the note to the superior," and then do as she decided. "I did that," declared the Saint, "but it only brought on me degrading treatment on the part of creatures."¹⁸ A charmingly vague indication, motivated by a feeling of refinement and modesty.

What was the content of these warnings? We fancy that they to whom they were directed have never given up the secret. To make a guess, it would be enough to recall some of the complaints noted above. We can easily imagine the hard feelings which must have ensued.

Such was the meeting between Christ's two privileged souls, the third recorded by the autobiographies of Margaret Mary. In it our Saint manifested, as she had been ordered to do, the treasures of the Sacred Heart, and the form her own personal devotion had taken. There is still nothing of the practices of the public devotion desired by Jesus; nothing explicit either about the mission with which the two apostles are going to be entrusted for the whole church. This is merely glimpsed. But the details will not be long in coming.

Consequent on the death of the Abbess de Nérestang, La Colombière felt obliged doubtless towards the end of May, 1675, to pay a visit to the Bénissons-Dieu, and did not delay. On June 2, the feast of Pentecost, he preached at Paray. If this was not his first sermon in the town, it was the first at least to attract any attention. He swept his audience off its feet.¹⁹

The day which has justly been called the day of the "great revelation of the Sacred Heart" was approaching. In the course of the earlier interview, the director had commanded Margaret Mary "to write down what was happening to her." He wanted to be able to meditate over it at leisure. But the sister "felt a mortal repugnance to doing so." "I wrote out of obedience, and then I burned it, thinking I had sufficiently satisfied the demands of obedience." This way of acting,

¹⁸ *Autob. R.*, Gt. II, 94.

¹⁹ *Abrégé de la vie et des vertus de la Soeur Marie-Rosalie de Lyonne.*

however, did not leave her in peace. Very fortunately, "she was given a scruple over it and forbidden to do the like again."²⁰ Of these secrets, only the following has come down to us. Claude has inserted the text of it at the end of his London retreat in January, 1677. Considering its importance, we reproduce it entirely.

Being in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament one day of the octave (Corpus Christi), I received from my God excessive graces of His love. I was moved by the desire of making some return and of giving love for love, and He told me: 'You could not make Me a greater return than to do what I have so often asked of you.' And showing me His divine heart: 'Behold the heart which has loved men so much, that it has spared nothing, even to exhausting and consuming itself, to prove its love to them. And as thanks I receive from the greater number only ingratitude, because of the disregard, the irreverence, the sacrilege, and the coldness which they have for Me in this sacrament of love. But what is still more offensive is that these are hearts that are consecrated to Me. This is why I ask that the first Friday after the octave of Corpus Christi be dedicated as a special feast to honor My heart by making a reparation of honor, by an *amende honorable*, by receiving communion that day to repair the indignities which it has suffered during the hours it was exposed on the altars. And I promise that My heart will expand to pour out with abundance the graces of its divine love on those who will render It this honor.'

"But dear Lord, to whom are you applying? To a wretched creature, a poor sinner whose very unworthiness would be capable even of preventing the accomplishment of Your plan? You have so many generous souls to carry out Your purpose." 'Ah, poor innocent that you are, don't you know that I make use of the weakest subjects to confound the strong, that it is ordinarily the smallest and the poor in spirit in whom I make my power visible with greater brilliance, so that they will not attribute anything to themselves.' "Give me, then," I said to Him, "the means of doing what you command." "It was then He told me: 'Turn to My servant N . . . and tell him from Me to do all he can to establish this devotion and to give this pleasure to My divine heart. Tell him not to be discouraged by the difficulties he will

²⁰ *Autob. R.*, Ct. II, 94.

meet with, for they will not be lacking. But he must learn that he is all-powerful who completely distrusts himself to place his trust in Me alone.'"²¹

Eleven years later, in her *Mémoire* to Father Rolin, Margaret Mary reproduced, almost in the same words, the first half of this excerpt, the essential part, in which we find the request, in honor of the heart of Jesus, of a special feast, including the *amende honorable*, and the communion of reparation.²²

Finally, in 1689, in a letter to Father Croiset, she recalled this marvelous event, which was for her the Thabor of her existence, her only purpose being simply to call attention to her long resistance and the privileged mission of Father La Colombière. "I have always felt harassed and persecuted at the thought of making known this divine heart . . . until in the octave of the feast of Corpus Christi, I had to surrender at last, not being able to resist any longer. In spite of myself, I had to make known to him what I had always kept so carefully hidden, because it was he who was destined to carry this great design into execution."²³

²¹ *Oeuvres* VI, 118 ff.

²² *Autob. R.*, Gt. II, 102 ff. In the text the autograph manuscript of which is in the possession of the Visitation of Paray, there are only two variations to note: 1st, for the second phrase, instead of the elliptical turn, "Moved by the desire . . . he told me," the Saint wrote, "I felt myself moved by the desire of some return, and of giving Him love for love, and He said to me: 'You cannot,' etc.: 2nd, Further on after the words, "hearts which are consecrated to me," she adds: 'who treat Me so.'

²³ Fourth Letter to Father Croiset. Gt. II, 577. In what year is the "great revelation" to be placed? Margaret Mary does not say. But as Father La Colombière was the first to hear of it, it could be only during his stay at Paray, therefore, in 1675 or 1676. After Msgr. Languet all historians place it in 1675. Vicar general of Autun before becoming bishop and member of the French Academy, Languet got his information from about twenty religious who were contemporaries of the Saint. He knew the depositions of those who had given testimony in the process of beatification. When his book appeared in 1729, eight of these contemporaries were still alive. None of them demurred. We see no plausible reason for rejecting his testimony, and place the date of this revelation in 1676, as an article in the *Vie spirituelle* attempts to do (November 1, 1938). The only argument which has any value is based on the assertion that Claude would have been continuously absent from Paray between the 10th of March and the end of May, and that consequently he could not have

"*Amende honorable*: . . ." By this word the old French legislation understood a degrading punishment, the public confession of a crime imposed on certain kinds of guilt, a request for the forgiveness of an insult or a betrayal. This confession could be interpreted as the disavowal of the fault, and sometimes the sovereign deigned to accept this retraction in place of punishment, as an *amende*, a reparation, and *honorable*, for the one offended, when the reparation was weighed against the wrongs inflicted. It was an act of this kind that Christ was asking.

When we think of the grievous scandals which constituted what has been justly called "the wrong side of the great century," how can we be surprised? "Ingratitude, contempt, irreverence, sacrilege toward the sacrament of love," when the saintly Visitandine repeated these complaints which broke from the heart of Jesus, she was a long way from suspecting even the hundredth part of the abominations which these words concealed. In 1675, at this very moment, there were being committed in Paris, sometimes under the impulse of the jealousies besetting the royal throne, those "execrable impieties," which a few years later were to arouse the horror of the judges of the *Chambre Ardente*. "The infidelities of hearts that are consecrated to Me." In these words, Margaret Mary saw the petty infidelities of the cloister, the only ones of which she had any knowledge. But there were others, alas, mysteries of iniquity, "black masses," to which in 1682 before the king and the entire court, in his terrible sermon on *Impurity*, Bourdaloue dared to make a clear allusion: "Would we have believed that sacrilege would have had to be the seasoning of a brutal passion? . . . That what is most venerable in religion would have been employed for that which is most corrupt in debauch, and that man, following the prophecy of Isaias, would have used his God even for the most ignominious of pleasures?"²⁴

sufficiently known the Saint in the middle of June to give her his full approbation. But no document allows us to suppose that Claude was absent from Paray for more than four or five weeks, from the middle of March to the middle of April, to give a mission, and a few days perhaps at the end of May, after the death of Françoise II de Nérestang.

²⁴ At the same time, the advocate Duplessis asked that all trial records of the *Chambre ardente*, or *Chambre des poisons*, be burned, "because of the

But time was pressing. The octave of Corpus Christi had already begun, and Jesus was asking this *amende honorable* for the Friday with which it ended. When the father learned of this, he wished to have a written account of this vision without delay. A blessed demand, which makes it possible for us today to possess a page—the one we have just read—drawn up while the event was still fresh and before the Saint could have forgotten the least detail

Confronted with a formal desire of our Lord, what was La Colombière to do? Fully convinced for four months of the sister's holiness, having no doubts after the earlier interviews about the divine origin of the spirit which was leading her, how could he fail to authorize her to make this *amende honorable* in honor of the Sacred Heart on the following Friday in order to make reparation for the indignities He suffered in the Blessed Sacrament? And how could he fail to agree on his own account to bear the same testimony of a repairing love to the heart of Jesus?

If, following Msgr. Languet, one were to state that Claude "consecrated himself" to the Sacred Heart on June 21st, 1675, meaning only this *amende honorable*, there would be no difficulty in admitting the statement. But if one is speaking of a full, ritual consecration, which without being a vow is still a positive obligation, an offering of all one's efforts, of all prayers, all merits, a promise to devote oneself body and soul to a cause, this certainty disappears. And still more so, if one wishes to determine the written, definitive formula which would have been used on this 21st of June by Christ's two chosen souls. Some authors nevertheless have tried to make it appear that such an offering was made, thinking doubtless that the more prompt

execrable impieties and the abominable filth which was found in them, the memory of which it was important not to preserve." And when in the last days of July 1682, the Chamber was dissolved, Louis XIV pronounced the penalty of death against anyone who permitted these sacrilegious and abominable masses, the revelation of which had been one of the great scandals of the trial. On the whole affair, see Pierre Clément, *La Police sous Louis XIV*, the author of which has himself given a digest in the *Revue des deux Mondes*, for January 15, 1864, under the title, *La Chambre de l'Arsenal*. More recent is the book on the same subject by Funk-Brentano, *Le Drame des Poisons* (1900).

the total consecration of their saints appears, the more striking will be their merit in the eyes of men.

It is certain that Claude made this entire gift to the heart of Jesus later on. At the end of his *Retreat Journal*, we find indicated both the motives which impelled him, and the formula which he used for this act of oblation.²⁵ But was it made, and in these very terms, in the month of June, 1675? When we recall how prudent and deliberate, how exact and intent he was to have recourse to St. Ignatius' method of election, such haste not only to obey the intentions of our Lord Who was asking merely an *amende honorable*, but to go beyond that by a total gift of himself—it does not seem at all to be like him. Wishing to improve on what their predecessors have said, each biographer, instead of adding to the glory of Margaret Mary's director, has contributed without intending it, to the falsification of his psychology. Today, after being accustomed to the devotion of the Sacred Heart for two and a half centuries, a complete consecration to a devotion which is justly dear to us seems quite natural. But at a time when no one in the Church had approved the revelations of Paray-le-Monial, when no one knew anything about them, it would not have happened just like that.

Besides, there is no historical evidence to warrant our affirming any such haste on the part of La Colombière. Father Croiset, whose support some claim, does not even in any way insinuate it. He merely declares: "The extraordinary graces which Father La Colombière received from the practice *soon* confirmed him in the idea he had had of the importance and the solidity of this devotion." Having "considered how full of tenderness were the feelings of Jesus Christ for us in the Blessed Sacrament, where His heart is always burning with love for men . . . he could not call to mind without a groan the horrible insults which Jesus suffers there for so long a time from the malice of heretics, and the strange disregard which the greater number even of Catholics have for Jesus Christ in this august sacrament." "This forgetfulness," he adds, "this disregard, these insults touched

²⁵ This is in fact the title he gives. In the course of this act which covers no less than two pages, it is also the word *offrande*, together with those of *don* and *donation*, which recurs, but not once that of *consécration*.

him sensibly and obliged him to consecrate himself *anew* to this Sacred Heart by that beautiful prayer which he calls *Offering to the Sacred Heart of Jesus*.”²⁶

At what time did this new, total and irrevocable consecration take place? Concerned as was Father Croiset to attest Claude’s prompt-

²⁶ *La dévotion au Sacré-Coeur de Notre-Seigneur Jésus-Christ*, p. 12. We have underlined *soon* and *again*.

We have here an excellent example, on the subject of this consecration, of how to a certainly known fact extraneous details are imposed, which are in part legendary, and are given credence. 1st. St. Margaret Mary in 1675 simply wrote that our Lord asked for an *amende honorable* and a communion for the Friday after the octave of Corpus Christi. She does not speak of consecration (Gt. II, 102). The Contemporaries, who began their work immediately after the death of the Saint in 1690, express themselves similarly, without adding any detail. 2nd. Father Croiset in 1691 also declared, without however indicating either date or formula, that Father La Colombière promptly consecrated himself a first time to the Sacred Heart, and later, that he *consecrated himself again* by his “act of oblation.” But he does not in the least say or give us to understand that the first consecration, in any sense, was formulated in the same terms as the second. 3rd. Msgr. Languet, who knew from reliable witnesses, as we have said, that the “great revelation” took place in 1675, clearly states that the consecration of Father La Colombière took place on *Friday, June 21st of this year*. But he does not say at all that St. Margaret Mary, whose life he wrote, had made the same consecration, in the same words, on the same day. 4th. When the manuscript of the Contemporaries was published in 1867, the date June 21, 1675, furnished by Languet, was interpolated without warning. It was necessary to wait half a century, until Msgr. Gauthey in his edition of 1915, suppressed this interpolation, which he rejected in a note (I, 138). 5th. Meanwhile modern biographers of the Saint and the Blessed appeared. They made Father Croiset say more than he actually did, relying on Msgr. Languet and the interpolated text of the Contemporaries; they added to it something of their own, declaring after Msgr. Bougaud that Father La Colombière, St. Margaret Mary . . . and probably Mother de Saumaise (why not?) pronounced on the same June 2, 1675, one and the same formula of consecration, which was nearly “the act of oblation” of London. 6th. Finally, devotional leaflets going their propaganda one better, gave two acts as having been composed by Father La Colombière and pronounced by him and St. Margaret Mary, June 21, 1675. One was an *amende honorable* (which does not appear in the works of the Father), the other an act of consecration (in which we find in fact fourteen lines taken from the long retreat, and twelve lines from his “act of oblation”): two acts, which Father Croiset (pp. 246 ff.) places among the “Devotional Writings” of St. Margaret Mary. So the legends grow. We have pointed out at the end of Chapter 10 another indeliberate falsification coming from the same pious deviation.

ness in giving himself, if there were some indication which permitted him to fix it not far from the octave of Corpus Christi, he would not have failed to do so. Now, he does not specify anything. Only one point seems certain. When Claude made sure that Jesus wished this devotion, just as Margaret Mary, "he must have surrendered, with no further power of resisting."²⁷ And far from reproaching today the two chosen souls for their "resistance," we would gladly apply to them the words of Pope St. Gregory regarding the Apostle Thomas: "His doubts have helped our faith more than has the ready faith of the believing apostles, for while he is led back to faith by handling our Lord, our minds, rejecting all his doubts, are in their turn made firm in their faith."

His resistance overcome, and wishing in an outburst of joy to record his defeat, Claude gives himself without reserve by the act of offering pointed out by Father Croiset. If his first editors have placed this act at the end of his spiritual notes, and as their conclusion, that does not mean that it was written after all the rest. But it is the crowning climax.

"This offering," declares La Colombière in a kind of prelude, "is made to honor this divine heart, the seat of all the virtues, the source of all our blessings, and the retreat of all holy souls." After having listed the "principal virtues which we wish to honor in Him," especially "the very ardent love of God His Father, His extreme patience and suffering," as reparation for our sins, "a very tender compassion for our miseries," Claude notes that "for all that, Jesus finds in the hearts of men only hardness, forgetfulness, disdain, ingratitude." He then makes his total oblation, stressing that which is its consequence, the perfect forgetfulness of self.

"In reparation for so many insults and such cruel ingratitude, O most adorable and lovable heart of my lovable Jesus, and as far as it

²⁷ But it is absolutely vain to suppose that Claude waited more than two years and a half—to the end of January, 1677—to acquiesce in this desire of Christ. To support this improbable surmise, some would attach a certain importance to this remark of La Colombière in the retreat made in London: "Our Lord gave her [Margaret Mary] to understand that I was resisting for a long time in a matter on which I was hesitating, so I thought, for fear of acting imprudently." These hesitations were concerned with another matter, as we shall see, than the consecration to the Sacred Heart. See Chapter 24.

is in my power to avoid falling into a like misfortune, I offer you my heart with all the movements it is capable of; I give myself entirely to you. And from this hour I protest, I think most sincerely, that I desire to forget myself and all that has any connection with me, so as to remove the obstacle which might prevent my entering into this divine heart, which You have had the goodness to open for me, and where I desire to enter and live and die with Your most faithful servants, penetrated with and on fire with Your love. I offer to this heart all the merit, all the satisfaction of all the Masses, of all the prayers, of all the acts of mortification, of all the religious practices, of all the acts of zeal, humility, obedience, and of all the other virtues which I will practice up to the last moment of my life. Not only will all that be in honor of the heart of Jesus and its admirable dispositions, but I beg Him again to accept this complete gift of it which I make to Him, to dispose of it according to His pleasure and in favor of whom He pleases. As I have already made over to the holy souls in purgatory all that there may be in my actions that can satisfy the divine justice, I desire that that should be divided among them according to the good pleasure of the heart of Jesus."

Here he interrupts himself a moment to formulate more precisely some of his Mass intentions—a delicacy of feeling mingled with the qualms of the jurist. Then he finishes with this outburst in which he puts his whole soul, humble to the point of the most absolute mistrust of self, and loving to the point of utter confidence in God:

Sacred Heart of Jesus, teach me, to be perfectly forgetful of self, since that is the only way by which we can enter into You. As all that I shall do in the future will be for You, grant that I never do anything that will be unworthy of You. Teach me what I ought to do to attain to the purity of Your love, with the desire of which You have inspired me. I feel in myself a strong will to please You, and a great inability to succeed without very special light and help, which I can expect only from You. Accomplish Your will in me, O Lord. I know well that I oppose You, but I desire not to do so. It is Yours to do everything, divine heart of Jesus. You alone will have all the glory of my sanctification, if I become holy. That is clearer than daylight to me. But it will be a great glory for You, and that is my only reason for desiring perfection. Amen. Amen! ²⁸

²⁸ *Oeuvres*, VI, 125–27.

Originality of the Message

REAL as were the first doubts of Father La Colombière with regard to the message entrusted to Sister Margaret Mary, we must not conclude that in this devotion to the heart of Jesus all was new for him.

At the end of the thirteenth century God had given a glimpse of His providential designs in the matter of this devotion to the illustrious Saxon contemplative, St. Gertrude. On a feast of St. John the Evangelist, the Benedictine nun experienced an unutterable joy at the ceaseless beating of the divine heart, when she was allowed to repose on our Lord's breast as the beloved disciple had done. And as she was surprised that St. John, who had tasted the same delight, had kept the most absolute silence about it, the Apostle told her: "It has been reserved for modern times to make known the sweetness of these heartbeats, so that the revealing of these wonders may warm the ageing world when its love has grown cold."¹

Father La Colombière had read very widely, and as he himself admits, he had "a great passion for certain books which treated of the spiritual life on a more elevated plane."² Was he acquainted with this page? Perhaps; but we have no right to say outright that he was. Long before the revelations of Paray-le-Monial, he had at least profited, even without knowing it, from the repeated efforts of so many holy persons who came after Gertrude, St. Bonaventure, or

¹ *Legatus divinae pietatis*, 1. IV, ch. iv, t. II. The text has "*reservata est moderno tempore*." Some translate, "reserved for the last times," and would there see an announcement of the revelations of Paray. It seems evident, however, that for St. Gertrude, "modern times," for which is reserved the manifestation of "the sweetness" of the throbbings of the heart of Christ, comprise, if not exclusively, at least initially, the time itself in which she was living: the "modern" or "actual times" were her own. St. Gertrude had entered the monastery of Helfta in Saxony in 1261. It was a mile and a half from Eisleben, where she died about 1302.

² At the beginning of the long retreat.

St. Bernard, to penetrate into the heart of Jesus and deliver its treasures to the world. Like all interior souls, Claude long before found a pleasure in relishing in prayer the sentiments of this divine heart for His Father, or for us. The spiritual notes of his tertianship bear ample witness to this.

At the end of the First Week of his long retreat, after a meditation on the Holy Eucharist, in which he felt a special consolation, "penetrated through and through with feelings of admiration and of gratitude for the goodness which God has shown us in this mystery," he noted: "I have been deeply touched, both in considering the thoughts which Jesus Christ might have had of me when I held Him in my hands, and in considering those which He has for me, that is, the disposition of His heart, His desires, His plans, etc."³ At the beginning of the Third Week, in connection with Christ's arrest in Gethsemane, he wrote:

Two things have touched me very deeply . . . : the first is the disposition in which Christ advanced toward those who had come in search of Him. His heart is plunged in dreadful bitterness; all passions are unleashed inside of Him, all nature is disconcerted, and through all these disorders, these temptations, His heart is borne straight to God . . . it does not waver in choosing the side which virtue, and the highest virtue, suggests. . . . The second thing is the disposition of this same heart with regard to Judas who betrayed Him; to the apostles who shamefully abandoned Him; to the priests and others who were responsible for the persecution He was undergoing. . . . All that could not awaken in Him the slightest movement of hatred or indignation. I place before me then this heart without bitterness, without harshness, full of a real tenderness for His enemies.

No more than many other servants of God, in particular St. John Eudes was he willing to separate the heart of Jesus from that of His mother. "And then addressing myself to Mary, to ask of her the grace of putting my heart in the same disposition, I perceived that hers was in it perfectly. . . ." This meditation was finished in an outburst of love for these two hearts, models of the holiness which he wished to acquire:

³ *Oeuvres*, VI, 12.

O Hearts, truly worthy of possessing all hearts, of reigning over all hearts of angels and of men! Henceforth, You will be my rule, and in like circumstances I will try to take on Your feelings. I wish that from now on my heart should be only in the hearts of Jesus and Mary, or that the hearts of Jesus and Mary be in mine to the end that they share their own feelings with it.⁴

Thus, Claude did not have to wait for the confidences of Margaret Mary to know and to pray to the heart of Jesus, this heart of flesh and symbol of His love. How often, surely, when renewing his heroic "vow of fidelity," must he have repeated what he wrote before pronouncing it: "Be, therefore, lovable Jesus, my father, my friend, my master, my all. Since You wish to be quite satisfied with my heart, would it not be unreasonable of it not to be content with Yours?"⁵ It was to this divine heart, in thanksgiving for a love which had gone "even to excess," that Claude, at the beginning of his tertianship, had borne the most precious testimony of love that a religious can offer, the irrevocable promise of faithfully observing all the rules of his institute.

By what authors was La Colombière introduced to this knowledge? Even though we should never make the discovery, it would make little enough difference. When a current of devotion sweeps a whole generation along, such as that which is developing today around the doctrine of the mystical body, every Christian soul is the gainer, even though one may frequently be unable to say how the blessing came to him. Now it is very clear that in the first quarter of the seventeenth century, especially in France, spiritual men, priests, religious, or laymen, felt drawn in a special way to contemplate the interior of Jesus, to conform their souls to His. With a large number, this prolonged study had ended, if not in the discovery of the heart of Jesus—the spear of Longinus had for a long time pointed it out to the love of men—at least to a deeper and more systematic turning to account of the infinite riches of this divine heart. An historian, who is especially informed on this period, attests that the

⁴ *Oeuvres*, VI, 47-49.

⁵ *Oeuvres*, VI, 27.

devotion to the Sacred Heart, even where it remained a private and personal devotion, had at that time, "become general in Christian asceticism."⁶

Not to mention St. Francis de Sales, Bérulle and Olier, the famous Father Joseph, and especially St. John Eudes, who has been named by Pius X and Pius XI, "Father, doctor, and apostle of the liturgical devotion to the holy hearts of Jesus and Mary," how many, merely among La Colombière's brothers in religion, had contributed to this movement!

In the year 1652 there appeared at Lille, from the pen of Father Pierre d'Oultreman, a Latin folio of more than a thousand pages, "Uncreated Love Poured Out On Creatures," the fifth book of which was entitled, *Amor intensus: Cor sive Latus Christi Apertum, Ejus Typus*. At the beginning of this fifth book, relying on fathers, philosophers, saints, notably St. Catherine of Siena and St. Gertrude, the author endeavors to show that the heart is the symbol of love, in terms which already foreshadow Father de Gallifet.⁷ That Claude had personal acquaintance with this work, that he had also read the moving *Affections* of Alvarez de Paz for the Sacred Heart, or the *Considerations on the Wounds of Christ*, by Father Vincent Caraffa, who died general of the Society of Jesus, or the precious manual of Gaspar Druzicki on the *Heart of Jesus, Ideal of Hearts*, no one surely would venture to assert. But others round about him in Avignon, Lyons, Paris, his novice-master, his spiritual fathers, or brethren, his Instructor in the tertianship, were acquainted with them and could have used them for their conferences.

⁶ Bainvel, *Dévotion au Sacré-Coeur de Jésus*, p. 364 (English translation, p. 219).

A fable, invented about a century after the death of Father La Colombière, has it that he discovered the idea of the devotion to the Sacred Heart in England, in a treatise by a Protestant, Thomas Goodwin. But as Henri Bremond says, "it would be worse than ridiculous to attribute to Goodwin the slightest influence on the movement of Paray-le-Monial." On this tale, cf. a study of the Rev. Father du Bouays de la Bégassière: *Histoire critique d'une imposture touchant la dévotion au Sacré-Coeur*, in the *Revue d'Ascétique et de Mystique*, 1939-1940.

⁷ Pp. 960-63.

Of the Jesuits of France, at the very least those who in the seventeenth century were conspicuous among clients of the Sacred Heart, there are three whom Claude must have known.

First, Father Louis Lallemant's book on *Spiritual Doctrine* had, of course, not yet appeared. But while still alive he exerted a wide and profound influence through his teaching and his virtues, and after his death in 1635, through his novices and his tertians. This master was accustomed to refer everything to the heart of Jesus, "in all things in which we had a choice," especially in the matter of trials, crosses, or humiliations. "Consult the sentiments of this heart," he said, "and then make an honest election."

We have already met Father Jean-Baptiste Saint-Jure when speaking of Françoise de Néréstang. Writing of union with Christ which is the supreme purpose of his book, *L'Homme spirituel*, he wanted to know, "where this union ought to take place, and how." "For the place, I say that it is in the heart of our Lord. . . . We can take up our place there and remain there by our thoughts, just as we can take our place in spirit with any one and enter into his heart." As to the "how," Father Saint-Jure, taking up the vast framework in which the whole of the operations of the spiritual life are included, explains at length how in the heart of Jesus we should "exercise all the operations of the purgative, the illuminative, and the unitive ways."⁸

Father Jacques Nouet, whose reputation was at its height at the time that Claude was studying in Paris, was known to Claude personally. Yielding to the enthusiasm which so frequently forms the young into groups which in their eagerness to be trained gather about the pulpits of renowned speakers, Claude must have frequently gone to hear Father Nouet when he preached at the professed house of St. Louis. Now, in his *Homme d'oraison*, which appeared about the middle of 1674, a few months before La Colombière began his tertianship, the author, in some thirty pages devoted to the Sacred Heart, shows that "to learn to know God and to meditate on the mysteries of the life we call unitive," there is no "more appropriate place than this Sacred Heart. He urges us "to establish

⁸ *L'Homme spirituel*, II, c. iv, sect. 2.

our abode there by a solid devotion founded on four motives, the first of which concerns its nobility and excellence; the second, its riches and inexhaustible treasures; the third, its wounds and sufferings; the fourth, the prayers and worship of all the saints who have made of it the place of their delights." Not satisfied with having written these magnificent pages of doctrine—and we can say that de Gallifet himself when he outlines the theory of the devotion to the Sacred Heart, does not surpass them⁹—Father Nouet points out in a few solid paragraphs some means and practical exercises for "uniting our hearts with that of Jesus by means of a perfect resemblance."¹⁰ What is more, this is not the only passage—far from it—in the twenty-five to thirty volumes of his works, in which the author speaks of the divine heart. He frequently makes mention of it, notably in the lectures on the *Dévotion envers Notre Seigneur*.

Of all these Jesuits, as of several others, we can repeat what Father Bainvel wrote of Father Nouet. "It was enough for them to move in the direction of St. Ignatius to find the Sacred Heart."

We said above that among the spiritual men of the seventeenth century there were even laymen who felt themselves drawn to the divine heart. One of them, M. de Bernières, was in his last year when the great revelations were being made at Paray. He had published a work called *le Chrétien intérieur*, which was particularly dear to Father Claude. It was one of those books the sacrifice of which must have cost him dearly during the austere fare of the long retreat. The manner in which de Bernières is led to speak of the heart of Jesus is in no way particular to himself, and for that very reason it will be interesting to quote from it. It is characteristic of a period.

In a "Retreat of Ten Days," which he devotes to "the adorable person of Jesus Christ," in the third prayer of the second day, he had just been moved by the "thought that ever since the Incarnation, which is the wonderful union of the Creator with the creature," men, in order to renew and prolong this union, "are called to a very high degree of prayer." But earthly cares assail our spirit. What is to be done? "The heart of Jesus is the center of men. When our poor soul

⁹ Bainvel, *op. cit.*, 427 (English translation, p. 252).

¹⁰ *L'Homme d'oraison*, edit. 1866, IV, 1-28.

is distracted, it should be gently led to the heart of Jesus to offer to the Eternal Father the dispositions of this adorable heart, to unite the little that we do with the infinite activity of Jesus." Then follows a resolution which must re-echo through all his spiritual life:

This divine heart of Jesus will henceforth, my soul, be your oratory. In it and through it you will offer all your prayers to the Father to make them more acceptable to Him. This will be the school to which you will go to learn the supreme science of God, which is quite opposed to the opinions of the world, and you will find that all its principles are very pure and sublime. This will be your treasury, to which you will go to get all that you need to make you rich—purity, love, loyalty. But what is most precious in this treasury are humiliations and sufferings and the effects of poverty. A love and esteem of these things is a jewel so precious that it is found originally and principally only in the Heart of God made man.¹¹

As though to give a proof that he has not forgotten his resolution, in one of his later retreats, "which contains that which can make us enter into the true sentiments of Jesus Christ," Bernières gives this heading to one of his chapters: "The heart of Jesus Christ is the rich treasure of the Christian soul."¹² These are so many indications which help us to understand how Claude was gently prepared over a number of years for the devotion to the heart of Jesus.

Finally, let us recall this practice of the Jesuits, which goes back to a certain work by Father Nadal. It was printed at Antwerp, and joins an image of the Sacred Heart to the monogram IHS, to represent their coat of arms: twin bearings with which they adorned not only the title-pages of books, but the façades of dwellings, chapels, and churches. Must not all that have a part in these secret ways of providence which by roundabout paths predisposed for their mission the men who had been chosen? And yet, when he receives the confidences of Margaret Mary, the "faithful servant and perfect friend" of Christ hesitates. A clear sign that the message contained something new and unusual.

Moreover, would our Savior have intervened—and He did so in—

¹¹ *Le Chrétien intérieur*, edit. 1690, I, 333 ff.

¹² *Op. cit.*, II, 450 ff.

sistently a number of times—if there was question merely of confirming a form of devotion and of practices which were already held in honor? Or, if He had wished to approve an existing devotion, and nothing more, would He not have addressed Himself preferably to those who had established and propagated the devotion, such as St. John Eudes, to mention only the best known? Now, He approaches a poor girl of modest station in life and education, a timid child, prone to retire within herself, a cloistered religious, without any means of external apostolate; He plans for director and supporter a religious who is not to remain within reach more than a few months, and will leave for a foreign land where Catholics are without influence, and before long die. Could Jesus have given clearer notice that the realization of this message would not be the work of men, but His own, the personal work of Christ the Redeemer?

In fact, between the devotion to the Sacred Heart, such as it is seen to be in the spiritual writers of the seventeenth century, and that of Paray, there is this difference, that the first is a blossoming, like the crowning of earlier studies and meditations, the meritorious fruit of a labor that is in great part human. The second, on the contrary, such as is asked through the intermediation of Margaret Mary, is a bolt from heaven, which at first unsettles, a divine will which contrary to all human foresight forces itself on a soul from the very start of her religious life. "This devotion," a bishop of Autun has excellently said, "is not her work; it is the gift of Christ who taught it to her, for herself evidently, but also and especially for others. It thus became the cause of her holiness, of her outward activity, and of an apostolate for which the Savior instructs her, sanctifies her, and fortifies her with so strong a will that the Saint can no longer will except what He wills."¹³ For Margaret Mary and her mission the word of the Gospel is brought to pass in a most striking manner: "It is not you who have chosen Me. It is I who have chosen you . . . that you may bear fruit."

And yet, it is only too clear that this intervention from heaven could not aim at providing the faithful with a devotion that had

¹³ Msgr. Chassagnon, *A propos des révélations de Notre Seigneur à sainte Marguerite-Marie*, p. 7.

been entirely unknown up to then. That the devotion to the Sacred Heart is founded solely on the revelations of Paray-le-Monial is not only an error from the historical point of view, but it is a thought which has never been able to gain a hearing in minds brought up on Christian dogma. As Cardinal Billot has written: "Never can a devotion in the Church have a private revelation as a foundation. Worship in the Church rests upon the deposit of faith, and this deposit, now closed, was bequeathed to the Church by the apostles and is contained in Scripture and tradition. If, therefore, some private revelation has also its part in the establishing of a public cult, of a liturgical feast, of a Catholic devotion, this will be, this cannot but be, by reason of a purely occasional cause."¹⁴

It remains to determine what was new in the desires manifested by Christ at Paray. First of all, they simplify and specify, it seems, the object itself of the devotion. For the most illustrious of the apostles of the Sacred Heart at that time, St. John Eudes, who in 1672 had obtained the approval of the bishops of Normandy of a feast for several communities, the object of the devotion to the heart of Jesus was "complex enough." "It embraced both the physical heart of the Man-God, His spiritual heart and His divine heart." "Three hearts," declares the Saint, "which are but one heart, because His divine heart being the soul, the heart and the life of the spiritual heart and of His physical heart, He has established them in such a perfect unity with Himself that these three hearts are only one very unique heart, which is filled with an infinite love of the most Holy Trinity and an inconceivable charity for man."¹⁵ Expressions surely too complicated to define the object of a devotion destined for the whole body of the Christian people. The message of Paray boldly simplifies it. It is on the heart of flesh, symbol of love, that we fix our eyes. And without excluding of course the uncreated love of Christ, that with which He loves as God, it is clearly on His created love, that with which the Word Incarnate loves as man, to which the message draws attention.

¹⁴ Letter to Father Lebrun, Eudist, at the beginning of his work: *Le Bienheureux Jean Eudes et le culte public du Coeur de Jésus*, 1918.

¹⁵ *Coeur admirable*, I, chap. ii. Quoted by Father Lebrun, *op. cit.*, p. 55. By "spiritual heart" of the Man-God, the Saint understood, "the superior part of His holy soul, which comprises His memory, understanding, and will."

A further precision, and more characteristic, is this. At Paray Jesus is not satisfied with manifesting His love, an "impassioned" love, which "goes so far as to exhaust and consume itself" for men. He insistently recalls that His love is repaid with ingratitude, disowned, insulted. The heart which He proposes for our homage is always the heart all-loving and all-lovable, of ardent flames, of infinite treasures, the ideal retreat in which to offer God His Father our adoration and thanksgiving, refuge against temptation, asylum in which to weep over our sins and to obtain the graces of light and strength needed in our lives as Christians. But in a special way, it is a heart "surrounded with a crown of thorns and surmounted by a cross," a wounded heart, which in the Garden of Olives suffered more than in all the rest of His Passion, especially because of the contempt, the irreverence, the sacrileges, and the coldness which He foresaw in the future. It is especially for this forsaken heart, which is the symbol of an unrequited love, that Christ asks our homage of reparation.

In the Encyclical *Miserentissimus Redemptor*, Pius XI, fearing doubtless that some have minimized this aspect of reparation in the devotion to the Sacred Heart, forcefully recalls it. "When Christ," he writes, "appeared to Margaret Mary and disclosed His infinite charity to her, he allowed her to perceive at the same time a kind of sadness when He complained of so many and such grievous insults which the ingratitude of man has made Him suffer. Would that the words He then spoke could be fixed in the souls of the faithful never to be effaced!" The Pope even made the *amende honorable*, or reparation, one of our principal duties towards the heart of Jesus; a duty of "justice and love," since "compensation is due to the uncreated Love for the injustice which is done Him by the neglect, or the forgetfulness, or the insults of our wrong-doing." It is the practice of this *amende honorable* which Pius XI "in his supreme Apostolic authority sanctions, orders, and prescribes" for the feast of the Sacred Heart, so that all our faults may be deplored and all the outraged rights of Christ, Sovereign King and most loving Lord, repaired."

It is impossible to be more explicit. To accentuate his thought and to impress it on the minds of the faithful, the Pope had a new office

composed for this feast and a new Mass which, more than earlier Masses, made the most of the quality of reparation. As the new liturgical prayer declares, the heart which is offered to our adoration is a heart "wounded by our sins," *nostris vulnerato peccatis*, and, consequently, we owe it "not only an affectionate homage of piety,"—*devotum pietatis obsequium*, but more still, "a just tribute of expiation," *dignae satisfactionis officium*.

And yet, the devotion which Christ claims at Paray for His heart is not limited to reparation. It is infinitely more vast. Reparation is only a means. The end sought by Jesus is always that which was fixed by God from the beginning, "to be for us," as St. Paul says, "justice, sanctification, redemption" [I Cor. 1:30]. For Him who is eternally living at the right hand of His Father, there is no other care: "This is," He declares, "a last effort of My love." If He Himself teaches certain practices of reparation—communion, holy hour, *amende honorable*—if He sanctions His request by promises for a special devotion to His heart, it is because He knows better than any one the unique importance of the sanctification He wishes for us. "I have spared no pains to merit it for you. It has cost Me My life. Do you submit to be holy."

And yet, it is not this clear call for reparation, much less still this call for a total love, that can explain the first hesitations of Father La Colombière. They fit in too well with his own bent! They would rather have won him over at first sight. But Christ, according to the word of Margaret Mary, was looking for public devotion to His heart, not merely the devotion of a few privileged followers, but of the whole mass of the faithful, and throughout the world. He was not satisfied with a private feast, restricted to a community and a diocese or two. He asked outright to begin with a solemnity for the whole Church. This doubtless is what seemed new to Claude in the message of Paray, most difficult to accept and especially to realize. It was in vain that the holy religious told him: "Were I to see the whole world turned loose against this devotion, I would never give up hope of seeing it established. For the Master has assured me that He will reign in spite of His enemies."¹⁶ Was it not possible to fear

¹⁶ Croiset, *Abrégé de la vie de Marguerite-Marie*, p. 59.

that such a design on the part of a poor Visitandine was a mad ambition, an illusion, an absurd fancy?

During these times of Gallicanism and Jansenism it could not be the work of a day for the bishops of France and the Court of Rome to make up their minds about an innovation such as this. The sequel of events made this plain.

17

Sanctification of Convents

THE stern warning addressed by Christ to some of the companions of Margaret Mary did not prevent La Colombière from having a very high regard for the Institute of the Visitation. "I know it thoroughly," he wrote to his sister Marguerite, "from the frequent dealings I have had with two of your convents for a year and a half. Truly, I do not know rules that are better adapted to lead to high perfection in a short time. It is also true that among your sisters I have found persons of so lofty a holiness that I have never known greater virtue."¹

This was a glowing testimonial of that exceptional religious whom we have still to meet, Mother Marie-Françoise de Saumaise. The others, the Roselin sisters, Marie-Émérentiane and Anne-Liduvine, were among the Visitandines whom Claude admired and whose virtues he encouraged. The first of these, a delicate soul, who was too easily upset by the thought of God's judgments, had to be calmed by her director, and under the impulse she received from his direction made a good start by giving herself to God's love. But sometime after Claude had left Paray, Margaret Mary told Sister Émérentiane "secretly and in confidence," "I think that since the departure of the Reverend Father you have been slipping and are

¹ Letter written from London at the end of 1676, VI, 256.

no longer in the same good dispositions." The good sister admitted the truth of this before the judges in the process of beatification, "it was true at the time."² From London Claude continued to encourage her, assuring her that her trials "far from having a cause that cannot be corrected," have no other purpose but to arouse her faith and make her holy.³

More painful were the interior sufferings with which Sister Marie-Catherine Carme du Chailloux was overwhelmed: "For more than half of her life they put her through a kind of martyrdom," says her obituary. On the feast of her patron, St. Catherine, she had made our Lord the sacrifice of all the peace and all the repose of spirit which she could have desired. Sixteen months later, La Colombière, reminding her of this, exhorts her to persevere: "On the one hand you make me pity you, and envy you on the other. Are you not blessed to be in the same state as our Lord Jesus Christ in the Garden of Olives? . . . Here, we are in the midst of the carnival. . . . At this hour of the world's triumph, in the reign of sin, God is outraged. . . . His good friends must share His grief, and they should try to give Him all the glory which others rob Him of."

And instead of suggesting flabby consolations, he says: "Imagine, then, my dear daughter, that you are the official victim: take upon yourself for God's love all the disorders that are committed these days in all the world, and to expiate them, do not be satisfied with accepting all the interior pains which you suffer, but offer yourself to endure those that are even more grievous."⁴

Sister Marie-Anne Cordier was also of those whom the direction of Father La Colombière transformed. She was dead to all that was not God, and Claude thought her capable of a complete immolation. This faithful disciple, more careful than others to note down in writing the principles and the advice she received, took them as a rule of life until she died.

Charolles was the second Visitation convent which Claude knew at the time. It occupied the buildings which are now being used by

² Deposition of August 14, 1715. *Gt. I*, 516.

³ *VI*, 481. See further, chap. XXVI.

⁴ *VI*, 478.

the municipal college. Five arches of the cloister can still be seen there, like monastic remains, and the public gardens adjoining are still marked on the tax-maps with the name, "Jardins des saintes-Maries."

Of the religious at Charolles who profited from Claude's influence, tradition has preserved the names especially of Mothers Favier de Pédigon and Françoise-Lucrèce de Thélis. When La Colombière came there for the first time in 1675, the latter had been superior for over a year. As a religious she was held in high esteem, "inclined to virtue from an early age," according to her contemporaries, "she had awaited her fifteenth year very impatiently to consécrate herself entirely to the Lord. It was no time before she was well grounded in the fear of God, and a horror of the spirit of the world and its principles." And yet, Claude saw at once that in this chosen soul there were weaknesses which threatened to thwart the designs of God. On the 4th of November he told her so with a severity of which his correspondence yields no other example, except a letter to the abbess of the Bénissons-Dieu. It is doubtless because of their responsibilities that he is so stern with superiors. After some advice on the manner of making her annual confession, her prayer and her communion, he adds:

Everywhere I am having prayers said to God for you. Remember the fidelity I recommended for your retreat. . . . Stay in your cell through the whole time, like a condemned person who is kept separate from others, like one who is excommunicate. Do not appear in choir or other public places, except with great interior confusion, like a creature whom God has struck with His curse and who ought to be trampled under foot by all the world. You would not be in such danger of your salvation, if your condition caused you some fear. One is unable to feel one's illness when one is unconscious. It is quite plain that God is furiously angry with you, and to speak frankly, I am not surprised. But I think I see clearly that He wishes you to return to Him, and the steps He wishes you to take, unless I am mistaken, are that you live, in the pitiable condition in which you are, with as great a fidelity and as exact a care to mortify yourself, and to keep yourself in His presence as though you were all on fire with devotion, and that for as long a time as it will please Him to leave you in your aridity. Perhaps He will be touched by your constancy.

If not, I assure you that at least in the other life He will show you mercy, after having seen you suffer so long in this. Try to place yourself in the state in which you ought to be to die, for it could well be that this is the last grace that God will give you, and that death will follow soon after your retreat. Your health is not good, and our Lord might punish you by a temporal death for the abuse you have so long a time made of His grace. Prepare yourself as you should.⁵

These directions and those that followed were for Mather de Thélis the occasion of an energetic improvement and progress. Still superior at Charolles, she performed a heroic act that was proof of it. A person of rank, making a fuss over some accounting mistake, accused her of theft and injustice. Out of love for our Lord, she kept silence before her judges, and this daughter of a great house bore the insult without a word, leaving it to God to take care of her defense, until the accuser, undeceived, recognized his error. Far from bearing a grudge against Father La Colombière for his firmness, she always felt a very lively gratitude towards him. When he sent her three English girls from London for the religious life, whom persecution had almost entirely robbed of their possessions, Mother de Thélis very generously opened the doors of her convent to them.⁶

⁵ Quoted by Father Charrier, *Histoire du Vén. P. Claude de la Colombière* (1904), 117 ff. This letter does not appear in the correspondence published in 1901, in vol. VI of the *Oeuvres complètes*.

⁶ Twelve years later, St. Margaret Mary gave proof to Sister de Thélis of a like firmness. In September, 1687, she told her "not to be always resisting" grace; for, "it would finally give up pursuing you." "There should be no voluntary fault, if you desire to enter into the good graces of our Lord Jesus Christ. . . . It is a matter of the salvation of your soul. . . . I think that you would give pleasure to our Lord by going to Him with the dispositions of the prodigal son, but fear should not drive away your confidence. It is not said that this son . . . after returning to his father, left him a second time. Alas, my dear sister, if we could understand the harm we do our poor soul by exposing it to so plain a peril in these voluntary falls, which cause it to lose the friendship of its God. . . ." On October 11, she insisted again: "I cannot understand that a heart which belongs to God and wishes truly to love Him, can deliberately offend Him, etc." (Gt. II, 370-76). On reading such warnings we might think that the directions of Father La Colombière had not been very efficacious. But, first, it is not certain that these letters of Margaret Mary were addressed to Mother Françoise-Lucrèce de Thélis. She had in fact two sisters, Marie-Laurence and Anne-Marie, also Visitandines. Again, supposing even that these letters do concern Mother Françoise-Lucrèce,

A convent of Ursulines had been founded at Paray in 1644 by Antoinette de Toulangeon, Sister des Chérubins, for the education of young girls. It was close to the Visitation, on the north, and near the Charolles gate. Whenever there was a sermon there, especially by La Colombière, the chapel was frequently filled by a select group of the society of Paray, in addition to the pupils and the community. Several religious vocations originated here, especially those of the Visitandines, Péronne Marque de Farge and Marie-Marguerite de Lyonne. Unfortunately the building was still unfinished in 1675. Incomplete, uncomfortable, with too small a cloister, there was a danger for religious regularity. This condition of affairs made Father Claude uneasy, for it brought on much criticism and murmuring against superiors. Even after he had left Paray complaints which reached him continued to trouble him. One found it hard to live in this house, another lacked necessities. The more fervent sometimes felt themselves thwarted in their good designs. Concern in providing advantages for the convent became a diversion for a few, which threatened to become an obsession, and prevent a complete reliance on providence. Orders of authority were discussed—they were sometimes debatable. It was a case in which the director, dealing with the subject of “the superior, whether actually in office, or yet to come,” could give only the one answer:

“I beg our Lord to give them light and strength to help them acquit themselves well of their duty. If I could in some way or other contribute to the good order of your house, you know very well that I would do so. . . . I did not advise your superior to bid you do what she bids. But I have advised you, and I advise you again, to obey her. I do not answer you that she has done well in applying you to what disturbs you. But I very willingly take upon myself all the harm that you may do in following her bidding, which is surely the bidding of God.”⁷

that would simply prove that periods of great fervor succeeded others in which the support of a saint was necessary for her. The confidence which she showed in Margaret Mary, the humility which she manifested in accepting her remonstrances, make it clear that she never gave up the work of her perfection.

⁷ To the Ursuline Sisters, VI, 557–70.

This having been recognized, for one does not quiet malcontents by denying the evidence, the father ceaselessly applied himself to recommend "simplicity and humility":

Simplicity helps us to forget our own lights, and humility persuades us that everybody has more of them than we have. A truly humble person sees only his own defects in himself and is not aware of those of others. Dear God, what a sad occupation, to pass one's time in examining the lives of others! I would rather be without eyes and without judgment than make use of them to consider and judge the actions of my neighbor. A heart filled with the love of God has something much better to do.

And yet, the wise director does not lose a single occasion of saying that "there is more virtue in that house than one might think."⁸ To Mother Marie des Anges, who as assistant to the superior received her share of grievances and applied herself generously to maintain peace, he points out the fine qualities of those who surround her, notably the "three dear Lafin sisters." "Beg of them for me to be always as good as I have seen them."

The day will come when the most unruly will equal perhaps the most fervent. . . . With you, I wonder how divine providence takes occasion from the laxity of a few to establish an overall regularity. I hope that this lovable providence will not stop there, and that it will change into a pleasant and voluntary regularity that which it will have forcibly introduced against the will of the more tepid. I do not cease to offer my prayers for this intention. I promise you that you will always have a special part in them.⁹

Claude was nevertheless convinced that the inconveniences of life had much to do with the condition of soul that he deplored, and he left nothing undone, even from London, in his effort to find a remedy.

There were difficulties of quite another kind that La Colombière had to unravel at the Bénissons-Dieu, in his direction of the young abbess, Madame Louise Houel de Morainville. This convent pos-

⁸ To Mlle. de Lyonne, VI, 439.

⁹ July 12, 1677, VI, 567. This letter is one of the very few of which we possess the autograph. It belonged a few years ago to a magistrate of Dijon, M. Berland.

sessed beautiful estates, and its wealth was an occasion of envy to a number of rich families. Among the abuses which in the *grand siècle* called for reform, that of religious vocations which were too much influenced by the "spirit of the age" was not the least, vocations which seemed to be more of an earthly than a heavenly call, sometimes the inspiration of parents in their concern to find a berth for unlucky heirs. They even placed them at the head of abbeys, procuring an honorable life for them, and often an honored one, one nearly always sheltered from the cares and worries of the world and surrounded with a flock of domestic servants such as they never would have enjoyed in their families.¹⁰

After the death of Madame Françoise de Nérestang, while the Benedictines were thinking of electing a nun of the convent to succeed her, they were told that they could spare themselves the trouble. Outside authorities were taking it upon themselves. The successor of Madame de Nérestang would not be chosen from the cloister of the Bénissons-Dieu. She was not even from that country, but belonged to a family of Normandy. She did not hail from a Benedictine Abbey, but from the Augustinians of Honfleur. She was well connected by marriage, and her protectors had obtained this change of religious observance. One can guess the uproar in the convent at this news. To justify such a derogation of rights, the appointee should clearly be expected to be outstanding in merits and experience. Well, Louise Houel de Morainville was twenty-one years of age. When at the end of the summer of 1676 she arrived at the Bénissons-Dieu, brilliantly attended, we can read in the bulls of her nomination, which she submitted to the chapter, the dispen-

¹⁰ Stigmatizing this practice, Bourdaloue declares that "it is a custom in all families, a kind of law, . . . against which it is hardly permitted to ministers of the Church and to preachers to object." This girl "is not called to this kind of life. . . . God does not wish her in that state; . . . she has no sign of a vocation. Nevertheless, this victim is led to the temple, bound hand and foot, I might say in a disposition of will that is coerced, her mouth shut from fear of a father whom she has always respected. In the midst of a ceremony, brilliant for the spectators who are present, but funereal for the subject of it, she is presented to the priest, and a sacrifice which, far from glorifying God and pleasing Him, becomes execrable in His eyes and provokes Him to vengeance." Sermon on the *Duty of Parents concerning the Vocation of their Children*.

sation regarding age, the authorization to pass from the Order of St. Augustine to the Order of St. Benedict, and the clause which required the young abbess to have the assistance of a prioress of the convent in all spiritual duties until her thirtieth year.

The journey from one convent to the other, from Normandy to Bourbonnais, while flowers were in bloom, was for Madame de Morainville a journey through fairyland. But when these days of noisy receptions were over, and her escort returned home and the new superior found herself alone and face to face with her duty, she experienced a moment of fright. Her life, hitherto frivolous enough, had hardly prepared her to govern a community so regular, and her surprise at the fervor of the modest nun who was appointed to wait on her, seemed to indicate that she was not accustomed to such edification in her former convent. It all gave her a salutary shock, followed by a very gentle movement of the Holy Spirit, urging her to give herself entirely to God. A few days later, Father La Colombière, whom the ember days doubtless had brought to the Bénissons-Dieu, received the confidences of the young abbess. She also expressed a desire to make a retreat under his direction. But as the father had to return to Paray at once, he could not give her that satisfaction. Not too long afterwards, however, he made up for it by a long letter, some lines of which will help us to understand how promptly souls gave themselves to La Colombière, and with what vigor he knew how to cast them upon God:

You told me things Sunday evening which have not left my mind since. Over and above my discovery in you of a depth wonderfully disposed for holiness, I cannot help admiring the gentleness and the strength with which our Lord is calling and drawing you. You have resisted long enough, Madame. The time has come for you to surrender. You cannot escape. You will have no rest until you have satisfied God, who so visibly wishes to be the master of your heart. To hear you speak, I thought the matter very far advanced, and it was hard for me to submit to the order of providence which obliged me to leave so promptly. I thought that if I could have remained only a little longer, I would have had the pleasure of seeing you make the sacrifice which you cannot longer defer without incurring the guilt of base ingratitude. How blessed you are, Madame, to

be so loved by God! For I cannot doubt His exceeding goodness in your regard. I recognized a hundred signs of it. And He will give you many other proofs if you do not resist Him.

You spoke to me of making a spiritual retreat. The thought is an inspiration from God, take my word for it. Indeed you are at the point where you ought to be to make it with unbelievable fruit. But since I am still young, and have neither wisdom enough nor experience for the direction of souls, I would not venture to assume this obligation, when you have need of a man who is very enlightened and very virtuous. I do not think that you should delay this retreat too long; in fact, it would be desirable for you to begin it as soon as possible. You should not fail to make a good general confession with the same exactness as you would if you were going to die the next moment. This will have the effect of purifying that soul of yours which God wishes to have as His spouse, and for which He designs to do in the future as much good as He has done up to now, if it does not make itself more unworthy.

Do not be afraid of the difficulties of a holy life, nor of your temper, nor your bad habits. That might make a soul afraid whom God loved moderately. Surrender yourself to Him only. He will soon level off these mountains that frighten you. Meanwhile . . . if you have the *Confessions* of St. Augustine, I do not think it will do you any harm to read a few chapters, and especially the eighth and ninth books, in which you will find many things that fit in with your present dispositions.

When you are not able to keep at something else, make an examen of your life for a little while . . . how you have responded to your vocation, what kind of religious you have been from the novitiate to the present. If all religious had been like you, would God have been very much honored? Would He have had spouses worthy of Himself? Compare yourself with those who are leading a better life; run over all your rules, your vows, your virtues, all the faults, all the actions of the day and of the week. What use have you made of your senses and all the faculties of your soul? It will be very strange if you are not moved by this consideration, and if you do not find in it reason for putting an end to the fickleness of which you complain. . . .

Make sometimes a solitary visit before the Blessed Sacrament, to beg our Lord to have pity on you. Present yourself before Him as a poor unfortunate, covered all over with leprosy, and bound with a thousand chains, so that He will see your condition and be touched by it.

But above everything else, I recommend Holy Communion. Appear

before Him there in complete confusion. Recall the life you have led, and reflect that your sisters offer quite another picture to Jesus Christ. Beg our Lord earnestly to touch you and cure you. . . .

I hope that if you put these suggestions into practice, you will dispose yourself to receive greater lights from Him Who is the source of them all. Be on your guard against falling back into indifference with regard to your perfection. Do not let this little flame, which God has enkindled, go out in you heart. If that happens, I do not think that you will ever return to Him. I beg God to ward off this misfortune, and I pray Him by His infinite goodness, and especially by the unlimited love He has for you. . . . I have already said several Masses for your intention. In your fervor, Madame, do not forget, please, your most humble and most obedient servant.

A few weeks passed, and, having given herself up to the examens suggested by her guide, weighing especially the responsibilities she had so imprudently assumed at an age when so many saints were still novices, the abbess was seized with anguish. Indeed! Here she was at the head of a community in which every one of the religious was much worthier than she of holding her office! In submitting to this gentle violence merely to please her family, perhaps also through some personal ambition and vanity, had she not been guilty of a piece of folly?

La Colombière's answer this time does not delay; it comes as vibrant as an arrow.

I do not know what you mean with your despair. One would think that you had never heard of God or His infinite mercy. I cannot forgive you such thoughts. I beg you to be horrified at them as you ought, and to remember that all the evil you have done is nothing in comparison with that which you do by failing in confidence. Hope then to the very end, I command you by all the power you have given me over yourself. If you obey me on this point, I will answer for your conversion.

Then, without delay, for fear that the first note had gone astray, Claude writes again, with equal vehemence:

. . . apply yourself without respite to perform some real penance, bearing a continual bitterness in your heart and a mortal dissatisfaction with the abuse that you have made of God's favors, and bearing all that

God sends you in the way of pain, whether inward or outward, with humble submission, until God's justice is satisfied, and by dint of punishing you, He has restored you to the proper state of receiving the favors and caresses of His goodness. For this time, be satisfied, please, with this.

"For this time . . ." But a short time later, leaving Paray for England, La Colombière passed through the Bénissons-Dieu. In announcing his visit, which was to decide the victory for God, he says:

Courage, my dear Mother, I hope that the time of your deliverance is near. You have need of a great mercy; but God's is infinite too. This is enough of writing, believe me. You can tell me, when you see me, what your pen has omitted. It is strange that you are so little sensitive to the sight of such a mass of faults, and that you cannot be sorry for having disregarded a God who is so good as yours. What have you done that brings you to such great indifference? I do not know that He has loved any one as He has loved you. . . . But we will speak more tomorrow. I am asking God to give you a grace like the one which touched St. Magdalen and the good thief.

Truly, this man does better than let his pen run on with full freedom of movement. He shakes off inertia, turns obstacles upside down, he persuades.

In her distress—but still under the watchful eye of grace and love—the poor abbess had mentioned despair. Claude was not unacquainted with this agony. Had he not written in the course of his tertianship retreat: "I know myself to be so miserable, that I am ashamed of myself, and this sight causes me from time to time such an attack of sadness that I would be driven to despair if God did not support me." This temptation which so often takes possession of the soul at the very moment when God is soliciting it to take the decisive step and throw off the heavy weight which impedes its ascent, Claude knew from experience. And it is because he knew it that he was so strong for fighting it.

If Claude pursued this soul with so much energy, is it not because he kept before his mind the complaint of Jesus to Margaret Mary? "What is most disheartening is the infidelity of hearts that are consecrated to me." So it is, just as for Mother de Thélis, because he perceived behind Madame Houel de Morainville so many other

religious of the convent, present or to come, whom Christ had chosen as His spouses, and whom He had predestined to become victims of love along with Him to complete His work of redemption, nuns whose sanctity would depend in large measure on that of their abbess.

Everything leads to the belief that Louise Houel de Morainville achieved her conversion, and that after having profited from the reform movement which was started by the two abbesses de Néréstang, she contributed to it with all her power. She died in 1695 at the age of thirty-nine. One fact, at any rate, witnesses in her favor. It is that instead of destroying the letters which were not entirely in her praise, she piously preserved them. And we owe to her our better knowledge of an episode in the loving pursuits which the divine heart of the Good Shepherd continues without respite all over the world.¹¹

The winning of Madame de Mareschalle and of Mademoiselle de Lyonne are two other instances, quite different, however, both in manner and degree. When Jeanne Morelet married Philémon Guinet, lord of Mareschalle, she was a Calvinist and an ardent recruiter for her sect. By her entreaties, some say by her violence, she exercised such an influence over her husband that he denied his faith. One evening in 1672, returning home in the dark, the unhappy man missed his step and was drowned. Jeanne was an assiduous reader of the Bible, and saw in this a punishment from God. Under the influence of this grace which came to her even before La Colombière's arrival at Paray, "she was one of the first," states an annalist of the Visitation, "whom his missionary zeal caused to abjure the

¹¹ The epitaph of the young abbess is thus worded: HIC JACET LUDOVICA DE HOUEL DE MORAINVILLE HUIUS MONASTERII ABBATISSA, NON MINUS PIETATE, CHARITATE, MANSUETUDINE INSIGNIS QUAM GENERIS NOBILITATE. ANNOS NATA TRIGINTA NOVEN OBIIT IN TERRIS, AETERNUM VICTURA IN CAELIS, DIE IV FEBRUARI, ANNO MDCLXXXV.

We can suppose that La Colombière also exercised his zeal in the Benedictine monastery of Marcigny, where several nieces of Father de la Chaize were then living (Charrier, *op. cit.*, I, 145). Marcigny is on the way from Paray to Roanne, and it is very likely that it was visited by Claude. But there is nothing that permits us to say so positively.

errors of Calvin." If he had not taken the first step in this conversion, at least he strengthened her in the midst of the strange difficulties placed in her way by her relatives and her older daughters, who still remained grim Huguenots.

Madame de Mareschalle had entrusted the education of her youngest daughter, Anne-Alexis, to the Ursulines. But the older daughters prevailed on their mother to withdraw the girl and set themselves to inculcating in their younger sister a detestation of everything that savored of popery. To hold her own against such animosity, and to continue on good terms with all, the widow found an invaluable support in La Colombière. But the crisis had not passed before he left Paray. On his advice Madame de Mareschalle decided to ask the Visitandines to accept the girl among their boarders, thinking that she would thus remove the child from influences which she felt to be perverse. According to the common law then prevailing, young girls could choose their own religion at the age of twelve. Anne was nearly fourteen. But when the doors of the convent closed on her, the young miss who had thought that she was only accompanying her mother on a visit, guessing what was planned, poured forth a torrent of abuse and shouted at the top of her voice: "Cut off my head! I'd rather die than become a papist and stay with these wolves and devils of religious!"

From these words we can surmise with what stories her elder sisters had stuffed her head. "For some hours there was such a strange uproar," that the good sisters were sure "that she was inspired by the spirit of lies." "No one dared," went on the annalist, "to place her with the boarders, she seemed so dangerous. She deluded herself into thinking that she could get out of the cloister by climbing one of the trees and throwing a rope over the wall. But our Lord did not permit her to carry out such a plan." In short, it was one of those solemn pranks which are to be found in the records of boarding schools in all times. But it went on "from Tuesday of Passion Week, the day she entered, until the 12th of May, when a wonderful dream, the effect doubtless of the prayers and example of the patient gentleness that surrounded her, marked the beginning of a period of peace. Grace worked swiftly in this soul, which in spite of all had remained fresh

and sincere. When she had seen with her own eyes what kind of "wolves and devils" made up the flock of the holy Mother de Chantal, it was the end of all the other lies with which she had been made to look ridiculous. On June 3rd, "the third feast of Pentecost," that is, Tuesday, Anne-Alexis, all radiant, imitated her mother by abjuring the heresy to which in truth her heart had never been attached. A short time later, on Trinity Sunday, she made her first communion.

When La Colombière received in London an account of this pretty adventure, he said that he was deeply consoled. "I hope," he wrote to Mother de Saumaise, "that this wonder will spread farther, and that a number of conversions will follow that of this little soul of predestination." A few months later Anne-Alexis was clothed in the habit of the Visitation. Claude's letters showed that he continued always to be interested in the spiritual progress of her mother.

Quite different was the work of grace in gaining possession of the wavering soul that was Marie-Marguerite de Lyonne. It was slower and longer, with an alternating ebb and flow. Daughter of Antoine de Reclesnes, lord of Lyonne in Auvergne and of Anne Baudinot de Selorre, whose brother, a councillor in the parliament of Bourgogne, was mayor of Dijon, Marie had a character that was delicate and strong, made up of blending shades, contrasts, even contradictions. Her vanity was open, almost childish, and yet greatly attractive.

Much coddled from childhood, accustomed to the gratification of every whim, she showed so lively an aversion for convents that the mere approach to a grille would bring on a fainting fit. But that did not prevent her from crying, at the age of four, when passing before the Visitation, "Oh, the beautiful house. I am going to die inside." Her mother, who already cherished for her a jealous and exclusive love, very pious herself, knew how to train her to a tender piety and to an exquisite charity for the poor which she never lost. Of a rare beauty, Marie found it quite natural to be admired, even flattered. In all the drawing-rooms of the Charollais and even "in Lyons, the second city of the kingdom, there was no other topic than the "belle of the Regards," Regards being the name taken from a holding of the family. Counts and Marquises thought themselves lucky when she deigned to notice their attentions. Along with that, she was so proud,

so conscious of her deserts, that she did not think that any one would ever have given her the half of what was her due. Happy in feeling herself sought after, flattered by the attentions showered upon her, she scorned the most advantageous proposals of marriage, under the conviction that even a prince was not worthy of her hand. Her merest desires were looked upon as commands, every one flew to serve her. But she paid them hardly any attention. Eager for distractions and never satisfied, she sought them ceaselessly, and always in vain. On her return from a reception given in her honor on the Saône, or coming from a ball, a comedy, the opera, she could be heard to sigh, "Is that all it is? And you promised me such a fine time!" Besides, her discretion was perfect, and her virtue was able to stand up against the severest censors. A Visitandine who in her youth doubtless had a taste for the novels of Madame Lafayette wrote: "One could not even reproach her for a certain "come hither" which breathed from her person, because artifice added nothing to her charm, and she did not seek to please."

The first knell to these vanities broke upon the air in a very strange way. The same pen has preserved an account of it.

One day, magnificently attired, surrounded by a crowd of people, as she was leaving benediction, a herd of fifty pigs returning from the country happened to be in the same street, right in her way. Each of her companions stepped aside to let the pigs pass without being disturbed by them. But this young beauty, as though she thought that these animals, just as the rest of the world, should have some respect for her, did not deign to step aside. One of the pigs, which was the leader of the herd and about the size of a small donkey, kept right on running. She suddenly found herself astride the pig facing backwards, while the pig ran up and down for half an hour, with the beautiful nymph on her perch. She was deathly afraid of toppling over into the mud, or of getting dirty, and was forced to hold the animal's tail as though it were a rein and call at the top of her voice for help. The ladies did not dare to help her; they would have to have had to make their way through the herd which accompanied its leader on which this modern Amazon was mounted in state, and which continued squealing a tune to make the bystanders deaf. The common people, instead of running to her aid, exploded with laughter to see this beautiful young woman in all her pride so completely

upset. She was so worn out with her experience that she had to be put to bed.

For two weeks the story made the rounds of Paray. Every morning as she was at her dressing-table, the belle of the Regards found a fresh bit of poetry, epigram or ballade that sang of her adventure. She "like the others, was amused, but it was not without catching a glimpse of the shallowness of the world, where our best friends are capable of leaving us in the lurch and of enjoying themselves at our expense, after they have left us."

Without a thought, however, of leaving this deceitful world, she was content for a number of years to give herself only a little more to her devotions and her charities. It was at the time when Father Papon, seeing her and her sister also, a little too spruce and trim under their bonnets, "called them perfumed midden." Frankly, she had need of another director. In the chapel of the Visitation she prayed to St. Francis de Sales to obtain one for her, and sometimes she thought she heard God promise her one.

At Father La Colombière's first sermon, on the feast of Pentecost, Mlle. de Lyonne felt herself moved. On the feast of St. Augustine there was no doubt about it. She was enjoying a pleasure party, surrounded by her relatives and friends, when the bell rang for the sermon at the Ursulines. "We would do well to hear this good father," she said, "instead of amusing ourselves." Everybody agreed and went with her to the convent. The preacher seemed to have preached only for her, so faithfully did his words, taken from the great Doctor, express what was in the depth of her soul: "O Beauty, ever ancient, ever new, how late have I known Thee, how late have I loved Thee!" Was not this the guide promised by God? And naïvely vain, even in her conversion, "she persuaded herself that he had come to this city merely on her account."

The father very soon recognized "that God was reserving this soul for Himself." But he did not hurry her. "Without the discreet handling of this holy director," she asserted, "I should soon have given up all devotion. 'Will you allow me to make certain adjustments,' I asked him, 'which it would be impossible for me to do without?' He will-

ingly granted my wish, at which I was quite pleased. But he added: 'God Himself will let you know what He wishes of you.' Before long she was ashamed of these fripperies and held them in horror. "What enchanted her all the more is that at her invitation, he sometimes spent a few days at Selorre, and by his presence gave approval to the innocent pastimes which she enjoyed with her family. As she was passionately fond of dancing, he readily agreed that she take a turn or two." And if he "did not wish that she undertake to give up all the titbits they served her," he told her also "that she should mortify herself by abstaining from some dish she found to her taste."

He was indeed the director of her dreams. "She would, the annalist assures us, 'have given up sleep, food, and drink, to listen to this earthly seraph who inflamed all who heard him with divine love.'" "My Father," she said to him one day, "I have a smarting pain." "And that is?" "I am afraid of loving God too much." Her guide reassured her. But she wished to love Him only in the world. Although she was "the most docile of his disciples," she had nevertheless, "made a bargain with him from the first," that he would never oblige her to become a religious. "A thing that he promised on the spot." Doubtless, Claude thought that there was at the time something strange and odd in her character which would never be at home in the cloister. This did not stand in the way of Mlle. de Lyonne's becoming familiar even with the most difficult virtues, or prevent her from "practicing certain austerities, the very name of which would have frightened her earlier. Her pleasure parties were now confined to the hospitals and the churches." When her director told her to use an hourglass to time her prayer, she answered with a good deal of surprise: "God save me, my dear Father, from measuring my time with God!" In a word, "the admiration which had heretofore been given to her beauty, now passed over to her virtue."

Mlle. de Lyonne had reached this stage when La Colombière was taken away from Paray. For two and a half years her spiritual life will have time to mature. We shall meet her again.

We have spoken of only the most conspicuous of Claude's spiritual conquests. How many others, perhaps more important, have remained hidden away in the secret of hearts! In the remoteness of her

cloister Margaret Mary, unseen, but present by her prayer, often received a secret account of them. And we understand why she could write, after a little: "Father La Colombière's talent is to bring souls to God."

18

More than Can Be Managed

WHILE the work of prayer and reparation went on the silence of the cloisters, life in the world outside continued noisy and hurried, bringing every day fresh tasks to Father La Colombière, in addition to the direction of souls. To his Visitandine sister, who was somewhat unwell, he wrote towards the end of 1675:

How fortunate you are, my dear sister, to be in solitude! . . . I could envy you your retreat, with all your woes, if I were not convinced that there is not a greater blessing in this world than to do the will of Him who governs us. . . . But, my good sister, there is the difficulty of being always among men and seeking only God; of always having two or three times more than one can do, without losing that peace of mind, without which we cannot possess God; of having hardly a moment to enter into oneself and recollect oneself in prayer, and nevertheless of never being out of oneself. All that is possible, but you will admit that it is not over easy.

The confidence came to an end with this delicious formula: "And yet, that is what I must do, if I have a mind to be that which I want you to be."¹

"Three or four times as much to do" as one can manage to do,—the common anxiety of true apostles. Fully to appreciate the tasks which pestered La Colombière, beyond even the care demanded by the government of a house, we would have to be able to understand the

¹ *Oeuvres*, VI, 253.

affection which he bore for the people of Paray. "You would have to know," as he himself wrote to several, "how dear your interests are to me, and how much I have at heart your eternal happiness. Christ our Lord, to whom I recommend you every day, knows the ardor with which I desire for you all the blessings of the saints." ²

The local chronicle of the time, as well as Claude's correspondence, will help us to form some idea, at least, of these "many affairs." Among the disorders which made his sensitive soul suffer, domestic and civil misunderstandings had their part. There were constant occasions of scandal, where the priest had often to allay hatreds, preach the forgiveness of offenses, and always to console. Thus, the famous duel which in the beginning of February, 1676 brought four young men to grips, three of whom were Bouilllets, cousins or nephews of the curé, La Colombière's dear friend. Having begun their quarrel on the *Place des Halles*, they were not long in drawing their swords, two against two, and they attacked each other so violently that they would all possibly have been killed on the spot, had not a large number of people run up and separated them. But wishing to carry their vengeance to the bitter end, they met, February 7th, "in an enclosed field near Paray, commonly called the meadow *Pasquier*, where the two sons of the said Carlain-Bouillet and Bouillet-de-Boissire, fought with such stubbornness that the son of the said Boissire carried off in his body the sword of the said Carlain's son, with which he was dangerously wounded." A few minutes later, Jean Viridet, master-surgeon, saw him enter his office with the help of some charitable persons. "Monsieur," cried Boissire, "dress my wound and give me some wine." Meanwhile in the *Pasquier* meadow the two others continued their battle, "with another kind of weapon, clubs now, with which they exchanged blows, but still in single combat." We are not told what the outcome was.

About the same time, speculation in wheat was the occasion of a number of uprisings at Paray. The monopolists refused to sell it to the people of the town, keeping it for strangers who came from a distance and paid a much higher price for it. A certain Payen, a merchant-carrier of Orléans, who came to buy rye from Samuel Gravier, was

² To MM. de la Congrégation de Notre Dame, *Oeuvres*, VI, 312.

besieged three days and nights in the inn where he had taken lodging. During this time, "wandering bands" came and went through the town, threatening with loud cries, "to kill all who had wheat to sell, as well as all who bought it." Fifteen to twenty rioters gathered before the home of Antoine Bouillet, the one from Lafin, crying out that "they were going to kill him." Bouillet thus threatened, had already seized his sword, when a group of friends, getting news of his danger, ran up and quieted the outbreak. Shortly after, there was another tumult against a forester of M. the Count of Coligny. He was rescued by a druggist who had all he could do to extricate him from the crowd that wanted to kill him. There was another riot "when a share cropper of Louis Bouillet, the one from Trembly, who had bought a wagon-load of wheat, was robbed on the highway to Hautefond." There were many other disturbances, "for which the drum was beaten day and night, and which obliged people to have recourse to the sheriff of Charolles."

Added to the concern which these happenings might beget were cares that were more directly religious. First of all, there was the help he wanted to be to the clergy, a help which involved many problems, some of them delicate indeed. During the twenty months that Claude lived at Paray, the bishop of Autun, Gabriel de Roquette, was continually absent from his diocese. He was doubtless a prelate of merit. He could even have been given the title of reforming bishop. Informed beforehand of grave abuses which dishonored his episcopal city, he had, on the day of his enthronement in 1667, added each time to the three oaths required of him by the chapter, these words, which were never before seen in the book of customs, *Salvo meo iure et communi*. Without delay he organized a mission service, laid the first stone for a seminary, and opened a hospital. But, as he was quite well known in the world before becoming a bishop, especially to the Duchess de Longueville and the Prince de Conti, he found living away from Paris a rather dismal experience. Although his brother Emmanuel, likewise a priest, busied himself at Paris with the affairs of the diocese of Autun, Gabriel de Roquette found it easy to persuade himself that the success of his plans for reform made necessary long visits to the capital and to Versailles. He even followed the court

as it moved about. Frequent as was this abuse of nonresidence, it no less constituted a violation of the statutes of the Council of Trent, and was not a good example. It could possibly have been for this reason that the chapter of 1707 refused to bury the bishop in his cathedral.

At Paray, Messire Jean-Éléonor Bouillet, aged forty-six, had exercised the office of curé since 1661. Although the parish "was composed of from fifteen to sixteen hundred communicants, and was widely extended, it had no vicar, no pension having been provided for this purpose by the Lord Abbot of Cluny."³ He was "known to have the best heart in the world," but according to an ecclesiastical visitor in 1674, "he shows little devotion to his duties, very frequently dispenses himself from the office and other obligations, and is accused of being a bit too exacting, sometimes taking six livres and sometimes eight, for a burial." However, "he is capable of doing good work, if he wants to take the trouble." Several years went by, and here is what the visitor of 1681 has to say without qualification: "Messire Jean-Éléonor Bouillet acquits himself very well of his obligations." A mystery? No: between the two dates, a saint had quietly made friends with the curé. The presbytery being almost next door to the college, the friendship almost made itself. As the Jesuits were obliged by contract to preach three times a week at Saint-Nicolas during Advent and Lent, a fraternal collaboration came to exist which was of benefit to the parish.

Later on, some disappointed spirits still complained that Messire Éléonor "had no rule for the hour of Mass." When the visitor made some remark about this to the good curé and asked him whether this negligence didn't come from too much attention to sport, he admitted that it did before—doubtless before becoming acquainted with La Colombière—"when he was very much given to it; but that for the past few years, he had largely given it up, and it was his purpose to do so even more."

³ Episcopal visitation of 1669. All the information which follows is taken from this report, or from the four other memorials drawn up on the occasion of the canonical visitations between 1671 and 1689 (Arch. depart. de Saône-et-Loire, G. 913; 933, pieces 3-6; 934, piece 60).

The friendship between the two priests survived La Colombière's stay at Paray. A year after he left, he wrote to Messire Bouillet:

You are afraid that the loss of your letters has somewhat impaired our friendship. What do you mean, my dear friend? The ties that are in Jesus Christ are unalterable, and I assure you that neither my removal, nor your silence, has ever changed me in your regard. On the contrary, I think that I love my friends more every day: the whole Court would not be able to blot them out either from my mind or my heart.

After some details about life in England, he ends with this word of esteem and respect: "If I trusted my courage, I would ask you for news of your whole city, which I regard as a great family, of which God has made you the head, and which you will lead, I pray, to paradise by your holy discourses and your good example."⁴

The example of the pastor was more eloquent than his discourses. Messire Bouillet did not succeed, although he was a doctor in theology, in recapturing his taste for study. When he was over sixty, and a little decrepit, he could not prevent the archpriest of Charolles from writing: "He has neglected too much what he once knew. . . . Sometimes he dispenses himself from the sermon, and when he does preach, one wishes that he had dispensed himself."

Round about the curé, at greater or less distances, gravitated his fellows in the *mépart*. At this time, they numbered fifteen, nine of whom were qualified by the canonical visitors as "good priests," with a reputation for wisdom, faithful in the confessional and at the office, although one was declared too faithful a disciple of St. Hubert, and two others too much "given to the use of pistols." The most deserving of them all was Messire Claude Baudinot, who was "devoted to all exercises of piety." When he was a little older, it was said of him: "He may not be very learned, but he has a fund of virtue and great zeal. He is a great help to the parish and has more to do than the curé." Among the other six confreres, there was an old man who hardly ever left the house, two who were called, the one a "good soul," the second, "good-natured enough, but melancholy, and no student." Unfortunately, three are signalized by terms that are harsh indeed in the

⁴ *Oeuvres*, VI, 305 ff.

visits of 1671 and 1674, as being very well known at the fairs and in taverns. It is they who wrest this painful exclamation from the heart of La Colombière: "A priest who feeds daily on the bread of angels and daily moistens his tongue in the blood of Jesus Christ, to use this same tongue in detraction and anger, to nourish in his heart the passions of pride and avarice . . . O God! O the scandal of Christendom!"⁵

The diocesan reports reproached the religious of the deanery with not having a zeal in proportion to their estate. It is certain that their mutual rivalry did not contribute to extending the kingdom of God. Had not Jean Bouzitat, the intruded prior of the "Ancients," been seen, on one of the very rare days when he was not absent from the monastery, to claim for himself the right of "beginning Vespers"? The "Reformed" had refused to give the responses. They did "answer, on the contrary, when Dom Eustace, their prior, intoned the *Deus in adiutorium*." La Colombière, whose preaching in the Abbey Church was the occasion of frequent relations with the monks, must have groaned many a time over such irreverences. Were they not a party to the offences which "disgusted" so painfully the heart of Jesus when committed by souls "consecrated to Him?" Our attention is called to the fact that on November 6, 1675, and February 6 of the following year, serious efforts were made on the part of the Reformed to "treat, compromise, and come to an agreement" with the Ancients "on all the law-suits and disputes either already judged or to be judged in the Great Council." One would like to believe that the spirit of Claude's peacemaking was not a stranger to these attempts. In 1689, the archpriest of Charolles had to report that the seven occupants of the deanery, five of whom belonged to the Observance, "have more revenue than would be needed for fifteen good workers, one of whom would do more in the Lord's vineyard than all of them together."

These rivalries did not do much to contribute to the comfort of the unfortunate. There was at Paray a "confraternity of the Ladies of Charity which had been established to help the poor who were ashamed to beg." But it seems that their resources were not equal to their zeal. The hospital was in a lamentable condition. In 1669 it

⁵ *Réflexions chrétiennes. De la fréquente communion* (Oeuvres, V, 244).

comprised "two large halls on the same floor," one of which was used as a dwelling for the "director," and the other set aside for the "use of the poor." There were "six bedsteads supplied only with straw, although there were five feather beds which were unmade, because sheets and coverlets had not been supplied." In ten years, the administrator, again a Bouillet, a lawyer, had at his disposal only 193 livres which had been received as alms. And so the hospital for a long time was known as a "nest of tramps and gypsies who sometimes made it the scene of disorder and debauch." In the chapel, which was erected under the invocation of St. Anthony, it was found necessary "to stop up several openings through which the wind could blow the host away from the altar."

The years slipped by, and in 1689 the hospital "formerly a house of scandal and abomination," had become, according to the testimony of the archpriest of Charolles, "an all holy house," which offered the most promising beginnings for the temporal and spiritual edifice." What had happened? We shall see in time. In the absence of any personal intervention by La Colombière, it must have been that of several members of the Men's Sodality, founded by him in 1675.

This sodality was in fact one of the means he made use of at Paray to bring to a successful issue the initiatives which he inspired for God's glory. Composed of nobles and middle class, lawyers, barristers, attorneys, notaries, and doctors, it was the participation of laymen in the apostolate,—*"Catholic Action"* before the letter. Too much inclined, as the result of a century of Calvinist arrogance, to bear the heretic yoke, the leading men of the city had an imperative need of the strength that comes from association. Claude proposed to them an association under the patronage of her whom tradition calls *"Help of Christians,"* and *"Queen of Apostles."* "Many of the men thought the undertaking impossible. They found it, on the contrary, so easy that it must be recognized as the *"work of God."* According to the rules they adopted, the sodalists were bound not merely to be faithful to their personal obligations, "the avoidance of all profligacy, quarrels, idleness," to "a perfect union and frequent use of the sacraments, not only to the family duty of promoting peace in their homes," but they obliged themselves to give themselves more than all others to

the social duty of charity and "compassion for the poor."⁶ The support which they gave to the transformation of the hospital shows how faithful they were to their resolutions.

The curé, Messire Bouillet, was one of the first to be inscribed in the sodality. Claude, who from his youth was a sodalist of the Blessed Virgin, must have renewed his engagements with the group at Paray. It was not a mere formality. Two years later, replying from London to a very kind address from the sodalists, he gave them the title, "*Messieurs, mes très chers confrères*," and in a later letter, the word "our sodality" having slipped from his pen, he insists on it: "I say our sodality, because, even though I am at a distance, I do not admit that I have been cut off from it. I am with you every day in spirit, and I find myself in the midst of your meetings receiving a share in the graces which the Blessed Virgin bestows on you."⁷

If to these different labors and tasks we add the preaching which, among the Jesuits at Paray, he alone was able to do, his direction of souls in several convents and in the world, as well as his efforts to develop the little college, we shall understand the added burden which Claude mentioned in his confidences with his Visitandine sister, "three or four times more work than I am able to do."

Meanwhile, the school year was not yet over, when superiors gave him a hint that there was to be a change. They "were thinking of opening a much greater field to his zeal and his exceptional talents." Father de la Pesse who speaks thus does not specify further. But there was question certainly of a post in France. The rumor was abroad from the last days of June.

"It is true," wrote Claude, July 1, 1676, "that I am to leave Paray in September. But I do not yet know where I am to go."⁸ Suddenly in

⁶ Letter of Father La Colombière to "MM. de la Congrégation de Notre Dame," August 18, 1677 (*Oeuvres*, VI, 309-14). The sodalists were so touched by this letter, which summarized their duties with so much warmth, that they wished to reproduce it, so that each of them and their successors could keep a copy. When informed of this La Colombière answered Messire Bouillet: "The members of the Sodality are too wise to think of having printed the poor letter which I have written them" (VI, 307).

⁷ *Oeuvres*, VI, 318.

⁸ *Oeuvres*, VI, 464.

August, matters take another turn. "They want to send me to England to be preacher to Madame, the Duchess of York. I do not know what will come of it. May God's will be done."

Asked by Margaret Mary to suggest a "resolution" before he left, the father sent her, according to the *Contemporaries*, "these few words which contain much":

You must remember that God asks everything of you, and that He asks nothing. He asks all, because He wishes to reign over you and in you, as in an estate which is His in every way, so that He may dispose of everything, that nothing oppose him, all bend to Him, all obey at the least sign of His will. He asks nothing of you, because He wishes to do everything in you without your interference in anything, satisfied with being the subject on whom and in whom He acts, so that all the glory will be His and He alone known, praised, and loved forever.⁹

On September 16th, wishing to leave his successor a house in which the finances were in perfect order, La Colombière, in the presence of the royal notary, arranged the little debts connected with the Bouillet house, which he had bought on the preceding April 28th.¹⁰ A few days later he left. From Roanne doubtless, where he had gone to take leave of his superior, he wrote to the abbess of the Bénissons-Dieu: "I will arrive at your convent tomorrow about seven o'clock."¹¹ Finally, from Paris, October 3rd: "The day after tomorrow I will leave for Calais, and with our Lord's help I hope to be in London by the 14th of this month."¹²

In this apparently hurried decision, Father de la Chaize, although he was not the canonical superior of La Colombière, is again shown to be the instrument of Providence. For one of the heaviest and most delicate missions—most dangerous as well—which could be entrusted to a priest, in the midst of a foreign people who were prejudiced against the Roman Church, there was need of a man who without anything of the spirit of the court would know how to make

⁹ *Mémoire* of the *Contemporaries*, Ct. I, 149.

¹⁰ Minutes of M. Billet. On this purchase, see above, end of Chapter 12.

¹¹ *Oeuvres*, VI, 595.

¹² To Mlle. de Lyonne, *ibid.*, VI, 427.

himself naturally acceptable to a court, a man gifted with great wisdom, prudence and holiness. The confessor of Louis XIV did not hesitate.

To appreciate the full importance of this post, we must take a glance at the political and religious situation which existed in England at the time.

..

☞ PART THREE

..

London

A Glance at the English Court

GRANDSON of Henry IV by his mother, Henrietta of France, son of the unfortunate Charles I, victim of Cromwell, Charles II had to pass all his youth in exile, first at the court of the Prince of Orange in Holland, and then in the Isle of Jersey.

He was eighteen when the Presbyterians in 1649 offered him the throne of Scotland, on condition of his renouncing the Anglican cause for which his father had lost his head. The effort was unsuccessful, and ended in the battle of Worcester, in which he lost his throne. A flight of six weeks across England followed, when the Catholics loyal to a man risked their possessions and their lives to help save him. Touched by such loyalty, Charles declared one evening to Father Huddleston, a monk of St. Benedict: "If it please God to restore me my kingdom, the Catholics will have less need to live in hiding." On October 16, 1651, he disembarked at Fécamp, to begin a new exile of nine years, divided between France, Cologne, and Flanders.

He was a poor king, reduced everywhere to begging his way, but he preserved the good humor of the Béarnais, his grandfather, and never for an instant lost confidence in his lucky star. Unfortunately, this vagabond existence developed in him loose and easygoing habits of life, which were the despair of his faithful adviser, Edward Hyde.

He began to deserve the name which was later given him, "the well known enemy of all virtue and chastity."¹

In 1660, General Monk, the head of the republican armies in Scotland, "Old George," as his men called him, placed Charles once more on the throne of England. It was to no avail that the restoration was received with wild enthusiasm and that Whitehall for a year offered the appearance of a continual fair, the nation remained secretly restless and sapped by violent religious dissensions. The Catholics hoped that the return of a Stuart would mean tolerance at least for them. The young king, most of whose friends, the dearest, his mother and sister in the first rank, clung to the ancient faith, also desired liberty of conscience for tender souls. But parliament did not see it that way.

There was a storm of indignation in 1662, when Charles wished to marry Catherine of Braganza, daughter of John IV of Portugal. The magnificent dowry—nothing less than Tangier and Bombay—which would have opened the gateway of the Mediterranean and the route to the Indies, made no difference. This "papist marriage" unsettled the security of the realm. If the marriage could finally be blessed at Portsmouth by a Catholic priest, it was without solemnity and in an ordinary drawing-room.

At the end of this year, on the occasion of the feast of Christmas, Charles, in spite of the law against non-conformists, declared that he would like to be indulgent towards them. He even had the prison doors opened for them. But the Commons were watching. Suspecting that this step had been inspired less by the interest the king felt for the Anabaptists, Quakers, and recusants, than by his affection for the Catholics, the House maintained that the Act of Uniformity must be urgently upheld, and shamelessly proposed for the royal signature a proclamation banishing papist priests and the Jesuits. It was an ultimatum. If Charles refused to sign, they would refuse the credits for which he had such an imperative need. He yielded, March, 1663, displeased and humiliated by his own faint-heartedness.

For fourteen years this miserable farce was to be repeated: Charles, at the mercy of his whims and more and more given to his

¹ All of these details and the greater part of what follows are taken from Arthur Bryant's *King Charles II*, London: 1931.

low pleasures; parliament speculating on the king's poverty and progressively hating popery and France. A witness of these changes of position, the Count of Cominges, France's ambassador at London, wrote one day to Louis XIV: "If Aristotle, who attempted to define even the smallest things pertaining to politics, were to come again to this world, he could not find words to explain the manner of this government. It has a monarchical appearance, as there is a king; but at bottom it is very far from being a monarchy."

The day came when the wealthy magnates who tyrannized over the House of Commons tied the strings of their purse too tightly. To avoid being choked to death, Charles saw only one recourse, his sister Henrietta, Duchess of Orléans, who for a long time had been advising him. Her advice was to appeal to his cousin, Louis XIV. Absolute monarch of a rich land, the king could put some pressure on his subjects in order to bind other heads of states to himself. In May, 1670, Henrietta came to Dover and negotiated the *Grand Design*. Charles II promised to become a Catholic and to join France in a war against Holland. Louis XIV granted the necessary subsidies for both enterprises, two million livres for the first, and three million for the second.

To what extent was Charles II sincere? It would be difficult to admit that his desire to adhere to the Roman faith was only hypocrisy. In the funeral oration for Henrietta of England, Bossuet did not hesitate to say: "This great king . . . will not find fault with our zeal, if we wish before God that he and all his people were as we." Two years later Shaftesbury discovered that Charles "performed his devotions in the chapel of the Queen." The Duke of Lauderdale was also so informed by a lady of the Court, the Countess de Désert. That same year the king came to hear Father Patouillet preach in the chapel of the Portuguese ambassador. The two ministers, warned of this "scandal," put their heads together accordingly.

The strange mixture, however, of political and religious interests included in the Treaty of Dover proved to be fatal. In the spring of 1672, when the English people, who had had no knowledge of the negotiations, saw themselves forcibly allied with a nation that was monarchical and Catholic, in a war against the United Provinces,

which were democratic and Protestant, they soon persuaded themselves that the war was only a pretext to set up two things in London which were equally detested, absolute government and popery. The reaction was quick. Forced to vote the credits for the war, parliament added the *Test Act* to its Bill, by which any one refusing to receive the Anglican communion and to take the oath against transubstantiation, became incapable of holding any public office. Powerless a second time, Charles signed, all the more shamed that he knew this Act was going to strike his brother, the Duke of York, straight to the heart. The fair dream of Henrietta had vanished. Besides, it was this younger brother that parliament was especially aiming at.

After twelve years, the marriage of Charles II and Catherine of Braganza remained childless. In spite of the advice with which he was besieged to follow the example of Henry VIII and get a divorce, the king always refused, "being unwilling to make an innocent woman hapless." It was in vain that the popular voice kept repeating that without a Protestant queen there was no security for the established religion. It was in vain that in 1670 the Lords passed a bill authorizing the divorce; the king was inflexible. "If my conscience," he said, "permitted me to break with Catherine, it would also permit me to dispatch her out of the world." Unfortunately, Charles' fidelity was far from being integral. The conviction became more and more rooted in the court that no respectable woman could accept a post there without running great risks.

There being no legitimate descendant, the Duke of York was the heir presumptive. He was known to be sincerely Catholic, which was enough to arouse public opinion. But for this prohibitory defect, James possessed all that could win the affection of a people. First of all, he was brave. Turenne under whom he had served, said: "If there is anyone in the world born without fear, it is the Duke of York." Condé was no less admiring. Both declared that this prince would make one of the greatest captains of the century. From his youth he was one of the most handsome of men. One can judge from his portrait at twenty in the gallery at Versailles. The collar that fringes the top of his cuirass, after the style of Van Dyck, frames a countenance that is energetic, full of spirit and charm. The features are bold, the

eyes large, black and sparkling with expression, the lips full and red, all indicating a constitution overflowing with health. Henry IV would have been proud of his grandson.

Besides, James had a tendency which should, especially, have made him popular. He showed himself to be English to his fingertips. His was an intense nationalism, which was not at all common in royal families. The blood of these princes was mixed with that of all the dynasties of Europe, and they were all cousins. "They did not have—they could not have—those feelings of a local patriotism, so deep and circumscribed, which were then beginning to gain such strength in the middle classes, and were to become a century later, a kind of religion."² Although James had both Scottish and Danish blood from his father, and from his mother the blood of Navarre and Tuscany, he was wholly English. It has been remarked that he never tried, contrary to the practice of courts, to speak French correctly. But in every other respect he was an extraordinary and devoted worker.

James' first marriage was a testimonial of his nationalism. Instead of going beyond his own frontiers, as was then the custom, in search of "a princess from afar," he had simply married the daughter of a barrister, Edward Hyde, belonging to the gentry, who had become the counsellor of his brother Charles. Anne Hyde had given him eight children, of whom only two survived, Mary who was to marry her cousin William of Orange, and after having contributed to the dethroning of her father, would at the side of her husband, now William II, usurp the throne of the Stuarts; and Anne, who after the death of her brother-in-law, would, like her sister, become Queen of England.

The fact of the matter is that until 1670 the Duke of York enjoyed

² His character has been strongly drawn by Hilaire Belloc, in his book *James the Second* (London: 1928). Many of the points which follow are taken from it. Even when after a reign of three years he was driven from his throne and France tried to restore him, James remained magnificently English. Nothing shows this better than his attitude when he was present at the disaster to the French fleet on the coast near The Hague in 1692. In the face of this catastrophe which ruined his last hopes, he forgot his allies, he forgot himself. . . . "Ah, my brave English!" he cried, raising a shout of admiration at the sight of the national victory won over France and himself . . . but by his own. He lost a throne, yet the great motherland which had driven him away remained mistress of the seas." Campana de Cavelli, *Les derniers Stuarts à Saint-Germain*, I, 74.

a real popularity. Grand Admiral and creator of the British fleet, he had at the head of his fleet won two magnificent victories over the Dutch, which made him the pride of his people.

But just as soon as James was suspected of inclining towards the old faith of Rome, all these merits disappeared behind the specters of popery and an authoritarian monarchy: the twin phobias. One faction urged on by Ashley Cooper, Earl of Shaftesbury, the most determined enemy of Christianity that England then knew, and an absolutely unscrupulous politician, was formed from the dregs of the old followers of Cromwell and a young generation of sectaries who were determined under the color of monarchy to set up a republic with themselves as dictators. The first obstacle to remove was the Duke with his popularity and his influence in the royal councils. The thought that James might one day ascend the throne drove them mad. The *Test Act* was a masterpiece of cunning. If the Duke took the oath, it would mean the renunciation of popery. If he refused it, he declared himself an open enemy of the kingdom.

Charles urged his brother to take the oath. It was so easy . . . and of such slight importance! Merely a matter of form. . . . "I would rather die!" declared the Duke. This was not empty rhetoric. James resigned all his offices, even that of grand admiral. In the full vigor of manhood, at forty years of age, he resigned his fleet, his life's work. In spite of the needs awakened by the war with Holland, the country criminally deprived itself of his services. Some Anglican bishops intervened. Could he not at least be present at the service in the Royal Chapel? This would permit a "stilling of the storm." "No," he answered again, "my conscience forbids me to do evil in order that good might come of it."

On Easter Sunday, 1673, however, James was present "at a sermon *coram rege*, in a very crowded audience." On this occasion, the Protestant John Evelyn recounts: "I stood up to see whether, according to custom, the Duke of York received communion with the King; but he did not, to the amazement of everybody. This being the second year he had forborne and put it off . . . gave exceeding grief and scandal to the whole nation, that the heir of it and the son of a martyr for the Protestant religion should apostatize."

Later, speaking of these persecutions with the nuncio, Ferdinand Adda, James congratulated himself on having found occasion to set right the prepossessions of public opinion. "Protestants thought, in fact, that Catholics, because of their mental reservations, might lie as they wished. Even I formerly made this mistake, and had a request sent to Rome for a dispensation to allow me to receive the Anglican communion at the side of the king, my brother. Naturally, it was refused." The pope's decision had caused the prince a real joy. In this way the nation learned that a Catholic's conscience cannot be tampered with.

For a long time this decision surprised the diplomats who judge events from the sole point of view of mere politics. In a letter to Louis XIV, one of the French ambassadors wrote: "One can easily see that up to this moment, princes have changed their religion to profess that of the states whose crowns they wish to see safely on their heads. But there have been few examples where the heir apparent of a crown has given up the religion of the country to embrace another, the exercise of which is hardly tolerated. This has not happened in England since the great change made by Queen Elizabeth. But the Duke of York has ventured to do so."

James was going to stand by his faith in another way. Anne Hyde had passed away in 1671, making open profession of Catholicism, to which she had adhered for a year. "Reading the history of the Anglican church," she wrote, "I learned that Henry VIII and Elizabeth changed their religion only because it was to their advantage to do so." Her last request was to ask the duke, her husband, that if a "pastor" even though he were a bishop should try to get to her bedside, it should be explained to him that she died inseparably attached to the ancient faith, and that it would be a waste of time to disturb her last moments with controversy.

Having no male heir, the better to make sure of the eventual succession of the crown of England, James resolved two years later on a second marriage. Braving public opinion, with the full consent of his brother Charles, he asked the hand of a Catholic princess, hers precisely, to whom Father La Colombière was to be sent as preacher.

While political and religious passions were thus being aroused in

England, under the limpid and serene sky of Lombardy, there lived a young princess who was hardly more than a child at the time, and such a stranger to the intrigues of the world, that her one desire was to enter religion. Through her father Alphonse, Duke of Milan, she belonged to the illustrious family of Este, which had been extolled in song by Tasso, Ariosto, and Dante. Her mother, Laura Martinozzi, a niece of Mazarin, had early been left a widow, and had given her together with her younger brother Carlo, a very austere upbringing. Mary Beatrice was nine when her governess entered the Visitandines, in a convent which Laura had had built at the very gates of the ducal palace. The child followed her to finish her education under the saintly Mother Balland. The presence of the princess far from withdrawing the religious from their observance was a source of encouragement by the example of piety which she gave, even assisting at the office in choir with all the recollection of the most fervent novice.

Towards the middle of 1673 she lacked only two months of being fifteen, and would have been allowed to take the veil, when, without any warning, an embassy under the leadership of the Duke of Peterborough, and supported by a personal message from Louis XIV, appeared one fine day at Modena. Interviews confirmed what rumor at London and Paris said of Mary Beatrice. She was a girl "of wonderful beauty, a lively spirit, tall and shapely, a complexion of roses and cream, hair and eyebrows as black as ebony, with gleaming eyes that were full of gentleness." At once and without further formality, Peterborough, in the name of his master the Duke of York, asked her hand in marriage. In his letter, which was dated August 10th, Louis guaranteed that even if the clause "was not stipulated in the contract," Charles II would allow his sister-in-law "the right of a chapel and other advantages and liberties in favor of the Catholic religion, rights and privileges which were allowed two preceding queens, Henrietta of France and Catherine of Braganza. Some days later, Cardinal Barberini, protector of England, received the same assurance in Rome.

To the surprise of all, Mary Beatrice cut short these proposals with a downright refusal. "Wishing only to be the spouse of Jesus Christ, she had an invincible aversion for marriage and would rather cast

herself into the fire." In order to get away from their importunities, she suddenly took off for the mountains. Writing to a Visitandine, doubtless in Piedmont, she ventures to express herself in French: "We arrived here at one o'clock at night over a road that was covered with dust. I am sending you this basket of peaches. Eat them for love of me." And a week later: "Yesterday and the day before we went hunting, and I rode horseback. Oh, my dear Sister, if I could only hunt for virtue like that, how much better off I would be" (August 22 and 29). Meanwhile, Laura Martinozzi, in her answer to the Most Christian King, did not conceal her daughter's motive for declining the proffered honor.

At once, as though religion itself were in danger, an assault by letter was launched against Modena and its ducal castle. On August 31, France's ambassador to Turin urged Father Garimberti, rector of the Jesuits, to use his influence to overcome the resistance. On September 9, Cardinal Altieri begged the same religious *strettamente* to do his best for the immediate success of the project. The same day, Cardinal d'Estrées expressed to the duchess regent "the surprise produced on the whole court at Rome by the decision taken by her daughter, Madame the princess."

We cannot be persuaded here that at so tender an age a vocation could be so mature as to resist all the weight of opinion which could bear on her to make so brilliant a marriage. I go much further, and say that even though this is a fixed resolve, it would be to God's service if she gave it up to follow another where, in all likelihood, her virtue and her piety would have a much wider field, and consequently a higher merit than she would find by retiring to a monastery.

Finally, on September 19, Pope Clement X himself sent a brief in Latin, *Dilectae in Christo filiae nobili puellae Mariae Principissae Estensi*, in two large pages to entrust with her the hope for "the abundant harvest of joy which the father of Mercies desired to prepare for the kingdom of England by means of this union." "The true religion, which has been forced to go underground in this land for fear of persecution, might be restored by you, and her ancient luster renewed." The pontiff did not hide "the anxiety and the deep pain into

which the refusal of this marriage had plunged him." So, he earnestly—*etiam atque etiam*—exhorted Mary Beatrice "to consider the great advantage to the Catholic faith, and allow herself to be guided by zeal to secure a higher good." On his part, he would assiduously see to it that "in this foreign land the princess' piety would meet with no obstacle," but would be surrounded with all necessary helps.

Till then Mary Beatrice had been at peace. "Why was I not born in a cottage," she wept. "If I were a peasant I would be allowed to choose my own life," she told the Visitandines. But as the pope had spoken, Mother Balland employed every means she could to obtain this sacrifice. There was need for haste, as the Spanish faction, jealous of this marriage, anticipated that the English parliament, which was to meet in October, would put up a formal opposition. They would have to be met with a *fait accompli*. Thus, on September 30, between the two parties who had never seen each other, separated by a distance of five hundred leagues, the marriage ceremony was celebrated by proxy in the city of Modena.

So as not to irritate the Puritan factions, the London government would have preferred that Laura Martinuzzi did not make the journey to London. But how prevent a mother in such circumstances from accompanying her daughter? "She won't remain in London more than a week," the Earl of Peterborough wrote to the Earl of Arlington. In fact, she was to stay there almost two months.

Mary Beatrice attained her fifteenth year the very day on which she with her suite of some forty persons began the journey, October 5, 1673. Shortly before her departure, on the feast which had formerly been set for her clothing, coming to bid farewell to the community, "she was deeply affected and protested that she would always remain a daughter of the Visitation." From Parma, at the end of the first stage, she again wrote to Mother Balland: "I have left my heart in your convent, and I will never take it away." Then, by Piazenzia, Rivoli, Suse, Saint-Jean de Maurienne, Chambéry, she reached France.

Louis XIV wrote to Colbert de Croissy, his ambassador in London: "There is no honor which I have not ordered to be given to the Duchess of York on her arrival in and passage through my kingdom"

(September 23). In fact, the elegant and spirited Marquis de Dangeau was at Pont-de-Beauvoisin, to receive the princesses and to have them travel "at the king's expense." At Lyons neither the magnificent reception by the syndics, nor the luncheon offered them at the city hall, succeeded in winning over Mary Beatrice. Even the Palace d'Ainay, where she stayed, interested her only because of the proximity of the Visitation of Bellecour. "This morning (October 23), we received communion at the dear sisters, where the heart of my dear and holy Father Francis de Sales is preserved. . . . We saw the pallet on which he died, his pillow, his clothing, his hat, his linen, his desk and all its contents. . . . On the spot once occupied by his bed there is now an altar with his portrait. . . . I felt immensely consoled when I saw all that, and I ventured to place my own heart very close to his dear heart and leave it entirely in his keeping. . . ."

The numerous letters which remain of this journey have a charming spontaneity. "I have arranged to make my meditation. The day before yesterday, I made it all before arriving at the hotel. God be blessed! Yesterday, for a fact, I did not make it." Or again: "In eight days I have omitted it only once" (October 13 to 23). But especially—we like to recall it when we think of the revelations which Father La Colombière was to pass on before long to some privileged souls in London—it is in the wound "of the sacred side of Jesus" (a devotion dear to St. Francis de Sales) that she makes a continuous rendezvous with the Visitandines of Modena. One day while clearing a difficult pass "in the mountains, she was alone in her sedan chair, grieving to be further and further away" from her dear sisters: "I had recourse," she writes, "to Jesus. And it seemed to me that with a most gentle hand, He drew me to Himself, telling me to be consoled, and that every time I wished to see you, I should come to this secret cell of His most holy side, near His most gentle heart, and that there I would find you all."

If Dangeau had not taken the fancy to go by water from Roanne to Briare, in order to vary the pleasures of his guests, Mary Beatrice might have made a stop at Paray. If only she had suspected the wonders which were there taking place, there is not any doubt that from Digoin, where the cavalcade passed the night of October 27,

she would have asked to go there and pray. At any rate, these five days on the Loire were enchanting, the real joys of a school girl on vacation, but of a pious school girl. "Mama and I, we two, pass the time very pleasantly, for on board we may do as we please. We spend the day reading, writing, playing, eating, sleeping, chatting, laughing . . . and saying the office."

At Paris Louis XIV came in person in great state from Versailles to greet the princesses. And the next day they were brought in the court coaches to return the king's visit. It was November 5, and the escort was in a hurry to resume the journey, when word came from London of a petition, voted unanimously by parliament against the consummation of the marriage, and that in the future "no heir to the throne should marry a princess who was not of the English religion." Among the eight reasons for the act, certain ones were aimed directly at the princess of Modena. She was excluded by name, because of her connections with the court of Rome, which would be like seeds of dissension for the kingdom. The people added to it even an odious calumny with the purpose of casting an aspersion on her birth.

But this time, Charles II stood his ground. Parliament was prorogued, and the head of the cabal, Shaftesbury, had to resign his office as Keeper of the Seals. After a stay of three weeks at Paris, the cortege resumed its journey, and by way of Abbeville, Boulogne, and Calais, reached Dover on the yacht *Catherine* December 1, 1673. The Duke of York was awaiting his young wife at the port, and was vanquished at his first sight of her. Three days were given to rest at Dover, and to give time for the completion of the preparations in London. But in order to avoid the mutterings of the crowd, which they did not trust, it was by way of the Thames, in the midst of the official acclamations launched from innumerable vessels, that the cortege made its entry. On disembarking it was thought prudent to go through Whitehall by a secret entry before coming to the Palace of St. James, where the Duke of York was living.

Despite the sympathy of her little court—there were twelve Italians on her list and twenty-seven English—Mary Beatrice must have felt the chill of this first reception. During the all too short weeks of her mother's stay, a little of the sun of Italy shone through the London

fog for her. But when Laura Martinozzi was on the point of leaving, sadness took hold of her daughter. "I beg of you," she wrote to Mother Balland, "do not let any courier come empty-handed to me, for your letters are a great help. I am very well, by God's grace, but I am not yet accustomed to this life which I have never liked. So, I am often in tears and afflicted and am not able to shake off my sadness. . . . But God be blessed! It is my cross, and may it be a consolation to all to know that the good Jesus visits me continually. I assure you, my dear mother, that my Lord the Duke is an excellent man. He loves me very much, and leaves nothing undone to please me. He is besides so solidly grounded in our holy religion (which he professes like a good Catholic) that he will not give it up for anything in the world" (January 8, 1674).

Some time later she ended a letter with these words: "Mama will bring you a little box. There is little inside, but with it I send you my heart. I keep it close to yours in the side of the good Jesus."

The climate had something to do with her gloom. In February she admits that she shivered with cold and was hardly able to hold her pen; in April, that she is getting over a bad cold; in July, it is a violent pain in the back. "My dear Mother, the good Jesus is no longer spoiling me, as He did in the corner of my little room. He is giving me hard bread, but I don't deserve anything else" (April 12, 1674).

Her first hopes for motherhood were bitterly disappointed, and this was a fresh sorrow for her. The sectaries were cruel enough to rejoice, and schemed for the marriage of one of the princesses, Mary Beatrix's step-daughters, to the Prince of Orange, so that the crown would thus pass to a Protestant.

But that did not prevent the Duchess from continuing her life of piety. "As far as I can, I daily make a quarter or a half-hour of spiritual reading. I read the life of a saint, or the *Treatise on the Love of God*, which pleases me very much. But when this reading is in French I can read it only for myself. I also say the rosary in public, I don't care who comes! When I have time, I say the office. . . . The rest of the day I employ in the duties of my state, but not without some repugnance." The letter ends with these charming words: "Not being able to see you during the day, I see you in my dreams, and just the

other night I embraced you a thousand times, as I would do if I could" (August 16, 1674).

Yet there were some joys mingled with this existence. On January 19, 1675, was born "a beautiful little princess," who was baptized Catherine Laura, the names of her aunt, the Queen of England and of her grandmother, the regent of Modena. "I am very well, and so is my daughter," she wrote a few months later. Thinking of her "promised land," the Visitation, she added: "Please God that she can go where I would like to go myself!" (April 30, 1675) It was a passing joy indeed, because at the beginning of October, "God called to Himself this dear and only daughter." Three days later, under the weight of her grief, Mary Beatrice saw herself deprived of fresh hopes: "This little one whom I did not think that I loved so much as I see I did, now that I am without her . . . And then, my dear Sister, you can imagine the sorrow when one desires to have children and loses two at once. But I thank God for all, and I often try to say with holy Job: "The Lord has given, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord!" (October 31, 1675)

20

Tragic Plight of the English Catholics

THE history of English Catholics in the seventeenth century has hardly been studied up to this time except in fragments.¹ Researches

¹ For this chapter and the chapter concerning the "Popish Terror," we have profited from very valuable information given in 1937 and 1938 by Father Basil Fitzgibbons. A large number of the documents on the English Jesuits which are used here can be found gathered together in the *Records of the English Province of the Society of Jesus*, vol. V, especially pp. 80, 221 ff., by Henry Foley, S.J. (1870).

have been made on this or that martyr taken by himself. But considering the number of victims in these endless persecutions, these researches, by scattering attention have prevented the production of a definitive and masterly work on any part of this history. Because of the absence of a Catholic University, no systematic and sustained work has been possible. There are some excellent monographs, but they are the work for the most part of amateurs exploring the terrain in their leisure hours as a pastime and lack co-ordination.

Even the sources of this history are deficient. Within the country, for a long time people hesitated, for fear of being searched, to put into writing events and judgments which today would be infinitely precious for us. With regard to the Duke of York in particular, whose conversion served as the pretext for popular outcries, the greatest discretion was needed, and greater still touching the long range hopes which Charles II gave of his conversion. On these subjects, which are of primary interest for religious history, it is noteworthy that the correspondence of Father La Colombière gives us not even the remotest allusions. As to the documents to be found on the continent, that is, documents emanating from exiled English Catholics on their way from Antwerp to Rome or Lisbon by way of Brussels, Douai and Paris, their dispersion has not made it easy to trace and catalogue them. To add to the misfortune, a large number of documents and files have been engulfed in the waves of Puritan persecution in Great Britain, in the suppression of the Society of Jesus, and the disturbances of the French Revolution.

There is a still more painful misfortune. Existing documents have not engaged the interest of English scholars. How could they not experience a secret repugnance to turn the leaves of one of the most offensive chapters in their national history, a chapter of which the British citizen has the least reason to be proud? In the last hundred years principles of justice and liberty have prevailed in men's minds, and Protestant historians are obliged to recognize the iniquity of these incessant persecutions. Concerning the *Popish Plot* especially, everyone now admits that the denunciations of the misbegotten Titus Oates, taken on the whole, were nothing but a tissue of falsehoods. Arthur Bryant passed a severe judgment on his countrymen of those

days, but one which surely is not altogether unjust, when he said: "With all this, the individualism of the English was of the most egotistical kind, for the liberty they sought so fiercely for themselves, they denied with fury to anyone else—to a Frenchman, a Papist, an Irishman."²

Catholics had a special reason for not publishing anything on this period. Recalling the lamentable differences of opinion on matters doctrinal and practical which had for so long a time set their persecuted brethren against each other, they feared that by digging up these memories, they would revive the old controversies which had continued more or less latent in men's minds right up to the end of the nineteenth century. When Major Hay finally broke this conspiracy of silence with his courageous work, *The Jesuits and the Popish Plot*, he thought he should by way of preface . . . and excuse, begin with this thought from Newman: "Here another great subject opens upon us. . . . I mean the endemic perennial fidget which possesses us about giving scandal; facts are omitted in great histories, or glosses are put upon memorable acts, because they are thought not edifying, whereas of all scandals such omissions, such glosses, are the greatest." But Major Hay's book got a very chilly reception from the English public.

Of the situation in which English Catholics found themselves, we will simply note here that which seems helpful to appreciate the ministry which Father La Colombière was going to exercise in London.

In the first days of August, at the time that Claude was getting ready to leave Paray-le-Monial, the Lord Treasurer Thomas Osborne, Earl of Danby, made known to the French ambassador "the alarm which the behavior of the Duke of York gave to all the people of this realm." "I asked him at the time," wrote Courtin, "whether there was a large number of Catholics. He told me that they had been very carefully counted, and that they were found to be only twelve thousand. I answered him cursorily that therefore they were not to be feared. . . ." So small a number should be understood only of influential Catholics, those who were outstanding, and among them only proved Catholics. To this number must be added the nameless crowd of common

² *King Charles II*, p. 236.

people, and the timid who, without denying their faith, did not practice it openly. In fact, according to one set of statistics, carefully established by Hilaire Belloc in his life of James II, it turns out that Catholics represented perhaps a seventh, certainly an eighth of the nation, that is, a number fifty or sixty times greater than that which Danby alleged.³

As a matter of fact, the "alarms" of the Puritans had causes that were much deeper and older than the mere conversion of the Duke of York. For more than a hundred years the remembrance of Queen Mary and her severity, assuredly excessive, but exaggerated by legend, had exacerbated these fears. And since the Gunpowder Plot of 1605, popery in the popular imagination remained bound to the most sinister nightmares of sedition against the security of the state. It is certain also that the beneficiaries or purchasers of church property, whether of the clergy or the aristocracy, feared that a return to Rome would deprive them of their rich prebends and their abbey lands. And so, a few weeks before the arrival of Father La Colombière, Charles II, entrusting to the French ambassador a letter for the Cardinal of Norfolk, Philip Howard, strongly recommended that he be careful not to lose it. "You know," he said smiling, "that here the pope is a horned beast of whom all England is afraid."

To this hatred of Rome prejudice against France was closely joined. The spectacle of a strong popular monarchy which this kingdom offered was too harsh a contrast with this "aristocratic plutocracy," which was already, as Belloc writes, "the principal characteristic of the English state."⁴ "Jealous of French power on sea and land," public opinion, although it had no clear knowledge of the Treaty of Dover, feared that Louis XIV would employ this power to destroy the religion and the liberty of the English." Was not the king of France in favor of the ambitions of Charles II on this point?

Desirous of lessening these prejudices, Louis XIV at the suggestion Buckingham had sent one of the most notable Calvinists of France, the Count de Ruigny, first as secret agent along with Colbert de

³ *James the Second*, pp. 50, 287-93. According to Macaulay the population of the kingdom should have been about 5,200,000.

⁴ *James the Second*, p. 53.

Croissy, and then as ambassador. He was a man of the sword, elderly and respected, whose family was united by several marriages with that of the Russells, who in turn were well thought of by English Protestants. His son was born in Great Britain. Until 1676 de Ruvigny did his best to bring about a better understanding between the two kingdoms.

Courtin, who succeeded him, received from Louis XIV detailed instructions which are still of great interest. They distinguish clearly between the leanings of the court at London and those of the nation.

The king must have been thoroughly satisfied with Charles II. "And if the affection of this prince was of itself enough to keep England in alliance with France, His Majesty would be able to look for certain assistance in all his plans." But Charles II "is not master." As to the Duke of York, "since he has a firmer mind, is more resolute and given to business," since he has "a strong influence on the mind of the king, his brother, he can do much to determine and fortify him." But neither is he master, and even "the open profession he has made of his Catholic faith cannot help him out of the unpleasant difficulties with a people so violent and so sensitive to all kinds of impressions as the English. . . . In the present circumstances we must look for a great deal from the affection of his Majesty." Having then gone on to particularize what could be expected or feared from each of the ministers of Charles II, Louis added, regarding the Duchess of York: "The king desires that M. Courtin have a special care to cultivate her good intentions": that he "accustom her to take at the side of her husband, the Duke, a greater share in affairs, from which her extreme youth up to this time may have tended to withdraw her." The rest concerns the "English nation on the whole." It is the stumbling block, for "to the extent that the court is well disposed towards his Majesty, it can be said that the nation is opposed." On the one hand, "the jealousy" which they have conceived of our "power, particularly at sea"; and on the other, "the religion which they have in common with the Dutch, and the affection which the Prince of Orange won for himself in the visit he made to London a few years ago, make them favor the Dutch and provide a foundation

for the cabals which were formed in their favor in the last parliaments."

Courtin could not have taken long to make himself aware of this cleavage between Charles II and his people. Soon he wrote to Louis XIV: "The bad will of the English is directed not so much against the person of the king, whom they do not hate, but against his authority, which they would like to reduce and make something like that of a Venetian doge, an idea which frequently enough escapes in their talk."

Meanwhile, the better to win the good graces of the court, the ambassador was told to offer the Princess Mary Beaffice "a magnificent pair of diamond pendants . . . but with the intention that the Duke of York should look upon the gift as a mark of his Majesty's consideration for him. To the Duchess of Portsmouth, a French woman, née Keroualle, who stood very high with Charles II, Louis XIV had also—his memorandum to Courtin reminds him—made a present of diamond pendants, and had granted her the lands of Aubigny in France for herself and the son she had borne the king."

A few months later Courtin was authorized "to offer more than 400,000 crowns if Charles prorogued parliament until May 1678." Very carefully each six months the ambassador gave an account of the sums allotted to certain lords and influential persons or party chiefs. He did not consider it beneath him to use lesser arguments. "It would be desirable for me to be able to pass out gifts of champagne and other liqueurs. You have no idea how five or six bottles of wine can help to soften minds, for when parliament adjourns for the day, the members dine with each other, and this is the time when cabals are made up." In his note of thanks the following month, he says: "The king of Great Britain has found the wine which was sent by M. Sanguin so good that he has never drunk better. This is why I occasionally have a headache; it gives occasion to the prince to have me drink to my own king's health, to whom he always drinks, so it seems to me, with all the warmth in the world."

But how could such means be successful against the prejudices which were rooted in a nation's heart for more than a century? A

few days before Father La Colombière embarked for Dover, these complex feelings of hate and fear against Rome and France exploded in a pamphlet, a *Letter of an Englishman to the People of the City Hall of London*, which produced something of a sensation.

. . . Our city, my dear friends, is in danger of being burned a second time, and I think I see it already reduced to ashes, like ill-fated Sodom; for diabolical minds, or better, instruments of hell, are engaged to set fire to our houses. . . . What is more, if our vigilance saves us from fire, how can we prevent the complete ruin of our city, since the inhabitants are forced to abandon it, because of the loss of commerce and the increase of poverty? There are already three or four thousand vacant houses. Our merchant vessels do not dare lift a sail towards the places where the French, who aspire to be masters of the sea, have power. . . . And they do so well that our seamen, urged by misery, are cowards enough to hire themselves out in their service, and through their ignorance have become the greatest enemies of our nation. . . . Our workmen are so impoverished, the French mingling in their trades, that their misery has begun to excite rioting. Products of our fields and factories are refused entry into France. . . . If this continues we shall become before long the slaves of the king of France, just as the Egyptians submitted to Pharaoh to get bread.

All these complaints were no more than antipapist maneuvers, for according to Arthur Bryant, "during the years 1674 and 1675 England enjoyed unusual commercial prosperity." And in 1676 Charles II "obtained from Louis a favorable commercial treaty."⁵ But what difference did truth make to the pamphleteer? With the same brazen audacity, the author continued:

It is not only our homes, our lives, our traffic, our liberty that are in danger: our protestant religion, our souls and those of our children are clearly in peril. The papists who are among us boldly raise their heads and say that their time is near; and the English religious who are living in foreign lands, openly publish that they will soon return to take possession of their churches, their monasteries and their revenues in this country, with the help of the king of France.

⁵ *King Charles II*, pp. 238, 251.

Treacherously the author flung into the popular imagination the suspicion of a possible regicide: "If the heir to the crown is a Roman Catholic, what assurance have we that the king will live eight or nine months? And what security for the protestant religion if a Catholic ascends the throne?" Then the unexpected and brutal conclusion: "To apply a remedy to so many disorders and to prevent the destruction of this city and the whole kingdom, judge whether there are other means than the laws expressly passed by parliament against the danger which threatens us?" One could not ask in a clearer or craftier manner for an intensification of the religious persecution.

If only Catholics had been united to face the storm! Alas, for a long time they had been offering the spectacle of painful divisions. Already in 1631 Urban VIII had tried in vain to compose their differences.⁶ The persecution, far from bringing them together, had furnished the occasion of fresh differences, thanks to the Machiavellian skill of their adversaries. The discussion turned on the greater or less submission to the pope. Some, among whom was the ecclesiastic John Sergeant, an ardent controversialist, did their best to minimize the authority of the sovereign pontiff. They insisted on the Gallican distinction between the deference due to the court of Rome, which they allowed, and obedience to the see of Rome, which they disputed. And this for political motives, in the thought that if Catholics compromised on this point, they would obtain considerable concessions from parliament. Others, among whom the more prominent were Peter Talbot, archbishop of Dublin, would admit no compromise on the point of pontifical authority in spiritual matters. The majority of the clergy, the religious as a whole, Benedictines and Jesuits especially, were of the same opinion. From the restoration of Charles II in 1660, the English "Gallicans" and the Jesuits had been at open war. The following year, when the reasons for exempting Catholics from the penal laws which had been submitted by the king were examined, the chapter of London accepted clauses

⁶ For this whole part see the remarkable work of Major Hay, *The Jesuits and the Popish Plot*.

which it knew very well must be rejected by the Jesuits, for these conditions tended to impose Gallican principles on all English Catholicism. The oath against the Eucharist, which in the mind of its promoters was intended to serve as a test in discriminating those who were faithful to the pope from those who were faithful to the nation, accentuated the divisions, and Peter Talbot, who had confirmed the Duke of York in his intransigence, was driven from the kingdom. In 1675—the very year in which at Paray-le-Monial, Christ was complaining of the “disregard, irreverence, sacrilege, and coldness” which men showed Him in His sacrament of love—when Talbot denounced to the Sorbonne the books of Sergeant as heretical, he was supported in England especially by the Benedictines and the Jesuits. Beyond the Channel discussions became embittered. Before long the hatred of Sergeant for the Society of Jesus became incensed, and ended by taking such complete possession of him that to find an explanation it would be necessary, as Major Hays says, to consult the psychoanalyst rather than the historian.⁷

What allowed these divisions to continue more than anything else was the privation from which England suffered in the seventeenth century of any kind of regular hierarchy. Knowing that the chapter of London was in the hands of priests who were for the most part Gallican in sympathy, Rome did not wish to give them a titular bishop with full authority, for fear that he would be under their influence and permit himself to be managed by them. It was desired for the time being to name only a vicar apostolic, who would be closely dependent on the Congregation of Propaganda, invested consequently with a limited and revocable authority. But the chapter was obstinate and, on May 24, 1667, declared that “to receive a vicar apostolic would be displeasing to England and contrary to the ancient laws of the kingdom.” It continued throughout the years to repeat its requests for a titular bishop, which the pope continued to refuse.⁸

In 1665, a cousin of Charles II, Louis Stuart—who bore the title of Abbot d'Aubigny, because he was the lord of that land, in Berry

⁷ *Op. cit.*, 53.

⁸ *Op. cit.*, 93–110.

—had been named vicar apostolic and cardinal. But he died on November 11, before the arrival of the red hat. His nephew, the Dominican Philip Howard, who had succeeded him in his office as grand almoner of Queen Catherine, was also proposed by Rome as vicar apostolic. But after long evasions and hesitations, Charles II opposed this nomination (1673).⁹ The English Church had to remain another twelve years in its unfortunate condition of a body without a head. During his stay in London Father La Colombière was to know no bishop.

Throughout these painful quarrels the Jesuits took their stand on the side of the pope, against the chapter. It was this which later gave rise to the story that if the English Catholics were so long deprived of an episcopacy, the responsibility is to be laid at the door of the Jesuits.¹⁰

Unfortunately for the persecuted Church there were other causes of weakness besides the foregoing. Letters of Philip Howard to the cardinal protector of England, Francesco Barberini, exposed them unsparingly. He speaks in them of the imprudent behavior of some monks and members of the clergy. He notes that the French Capuchins, a dozen of whom were in the service of the Queen, were very unpopular. Two of them had apostatized, and were leading very loose lives, and a third was not any better. Vagabond religious were to be seen here and there in the country. Two English abbesses, one of whom had come from France and the other from Flanders, behaved in a way that was very displeasing to the Queen. At the suggestion of Howard, Airoidi, the Internuncio in Flanders, came to London in 1670. But he was so horrified at what he saw and heard about the condition of the Catholics, that all he thought of was to get away, and remained only nine days.¹¹ If the prelate had taken time for a moderately serious visit, he would not have failed to discover almost everywhere families with strong Catholic traditions, in which an unchangeable attachment to the Church of Rome was

⁹ Howard then withdrew to his convent at Bornheim near Antwerp. In 1674 he there received the red hat, and a few months later came to Rome, where he lived with the title of the Cardinal of Norfolk.

¹⁰ *Op. cit.*, 69, 114 ff.

¹¹ *Op. cit.*, 113 ff.

preserved as a treasure: families of the nobility in which, on the testimony of contemporaries, there could be seen in 1673 "persons of the highest rank, both civil and military, holding considerable pensions, who had preferred to give up all rather than take the impious oath and partake of the Protestant "Lord's Supper." There were families also "moderately well off, whose whole subsistence depended on their salaries, and who no less had given the same example of fidelity. Strong in the faith, they had preferred a life of poverty and all but beggary to giving up their religion. Conduct," adds this witness, "which can be counted among the glorious trials of the Catholic faith." There were also families who, six or seven years later in the course of bloody persecutions, were to give martyrs. If Airoldi, instead of being struck with panic and hiding in fear, had taken the trouble to fulfill his office of observer, he would have seen these hidden virtues. His reports would surely have been less pessimistic and more accurate.

Still, there was nothing mythical about the miseries which Howard deplored. The *Annual Letters* of the English Jesuits still note in 1678: "The scandalous lives of certain persons of both sexes, who boast of being Catholic, is a matter of open notoriety."

After this hurried glance at the English Church, we should make the acquaintance of some of La Colombière's brothers in religion and of their dangers and labors in which he is going to have a share for more than two years. Up to the first years of the seventeenth century, the Jesuits in Great Britain had only a widespread mission. In 1619, their general, Mutius Vitelleschi, raised them to the status of a viceprovince. But it was only in the first years of the restoration of Charles II that they attempted the beginnings of a college. As a remembrance of a visit to London in 1530 by him who later became the founder of the Society of Jesus, it was given the name of St. Ignatius. Some thirty Jesuits were connected with it, the larger number of them being roving missionaries, without churches or chapels, and the counties of Middlesex, Surrey, Kent, and Berkshire as their field of action. About a hundred others were scattered up and down the rest of the land, without either house or home. Only at the end of their lives did some find a stable residence in state

prisons. To complete the effective force of the province, there were 150 religious, among whom were novices and scholastics, living in four or five houses in Flanders and Maryland.

Some foreign Jesuits were also living in London. Charles II, having authorized the practice of the Catholic religion in private homes, the Internuncio of Belgium wished to take advantage of this toleration to better conditions. They had spoken to him of Father Nicolas Patouillet, a Franc-Comtois, "one of the most distinguished preachers in Europe, and a man of exemplary life." Towards the end of 1671 he suggested to Clement X that this religious could "give an impetus to the good dispositions of England and strengthen the Catholics in their perseverance." "Living," he said "under the protection of the ambassador of Spain, and preaching in his chapel, he would be free from all interference and annoyance." It was, in fact, at the Portuguese ambassador's who, because of Queen Catherine of Braganza, was the most powerful of all, that Father Patouillet preached in French every Sunday of the year following. He numbered in his audience members of the highest nobility, not only Catholics but even Protestants, and several times the king himself, as also the Duke of York, who listened to him with a good deal of pleasure." Thanks to him and to several "priests of different orders who preached that same year in the chapels of the Queen and of other ambassadors, the number of converts grew, and Catholicism faced the risk for the first time, of coming out into the daylight before the people." The *Annual Letters* of 1662, to which we owe these details, also note that Father Thomas Mumford—frequently called Bedingfield—who was held in high esteem by the Duke of York, was invited as chaplain of the Navy, to hear the confessions of Catholics in the fleet, especially on the flagship.

The *Test Act*, alas, ruined these hopes. In the midst of the reactions it produced, Father Patouillet was arrested. He was being led to prison when one of his auditors, a person of influence, recognized him and had him set at liberty. As he was about to embark to pass over to France, the father learned that his enemies were searching for him and had sent out a description of him. Seeing his portrait affixed to the mainmast, this Franc-Comtois pretended to fly into a

fit of rage. He took a handful of mud, and filling the air with the most venomous insults in English "against this knave" he so smeared the likeness that even the shrewdest detective would not have been able to recognize him.

Meanwhile, this year, the Duchess of York obtained the "right of chapel," and was allowed a preacher from France. He who was chosen bore a fine name and had in the course of preceding years filled the office of *preacher* in the cities of Nevers, Moulin, Tours, La Flèche, Bourges, Rennes, Rouen, and Compiègne. Father Saint-Germain was in the words of his superiors "a man of great talent, good judgment, prudent, experienced, erudite, of a mild and well tempered disposition, as well fitted for governing as for preaching." But he had not learned to distrust himself.

For two years he filled this office to the satisfaction of every one, but towards the end of 1675 he made the acquaintance of a French apostate, who gave his name as "Doctor de Luzancy of the Paris Sorbonne." "I am ashamed," this man told him one day, "of having denied my faith. Help me to make my abjuration and to get back to France." At the same time he presented a retraction of his apostasy, set forth in the clearest terms. Father de Saint-Germain believed that he was sincere, and indicated for him in writing the details of the official abjuration. At once the knave hurried off to denounce him before the privy council and the parliament as guilty of high treason for having tried to bring him back to the Church of Rome. He even added: "Saint-Germain dared, accompanied by five men, to violate my home, to force me with a dagger at my throat to sign a recantation." These two complaints, attested under oath, were more than enough to cause the Jesuit's arrest. Two hundred pounds reward were promised to any one who would deliver him up. Meanwhile, informed of the truth, the king and his principal councillors were preparing to have this strange calumny examined in court, when it was learned that "on the advice of the fathers of the Society of Jesus and of persons of quality who were in touch with the affairs of state," Saint Germain had embarked for France. "What was the use," they had told him, "to try to answer an accusation before unfair

judges who were filled with prejudices, and from whom one could hope for nothing?"

It was soon learned, moreover, that the traitor, whose name was Beauchateau, his mother's name—an actress in Paris—was no more than an adventurer. A vagabond preacher, operating especially in Picardy, a swindler when he had the chance, careful about frequent changes of identity so as to throw the police off the scent, he had after a stay at Port Royal, assumed the name of de Luzancy, an illustrious solitary of the abbey. Arriving in London penniless and barefoot, he began to preach in the church of Savoy with such violence against the papists, that the bishop of London hastened to ordain him, to make of him the defender of the Church of England, to the great scandal of some Protestants.

Thus calumniated, wronged, hounded in a thousand ways, it is not surprising that even the most fervent among the Catholics were tempted to better their plight. They were aware of the favorable dispositions of Charles II, of his desire to grant liberty of conscience to "tender souls," to be indulgent towards the nonconformists whom he had released from prison; his efforts to soften the penal laws; his authorizing Catholic worship in private homes. Some also knew that at the time of the Treaty of Dover he had promised to embrace the faith. For all these manifestations of royal good will there was even a living witness: the hospitality extended by Charles II to Father Huddleston, the Benedictine who had miraculously saved his life after the Battle of Worcester. Was not this almost continuous presence of a monk at Whitehall a symbol? Did it not offer some guarantee? But still more was known, namely, that despite these outbursts of independence which tended to save the essential prerogatives of royalty, Charles in the presence of a parliament which was tyrannized over by the great financiers, had shown himself weak and powerless. On other grounds how were they to hope for a sincere conversion on the part of a prince who was so given up to the indulgence of his passions? The only attempt which had any chance of success would have to be based on his tendency to toleration. But even to get this far it would be necessary to weaken the omnipotence of

the House of Commons, and as they held the king by the purse strings especially, to find some foreign river of gold that would expand his budget. There was no other who could do it but Louis XIV. And this was the conclusion that Charles himself had come to.

Thus the *Grand Design* of which his sister Henriette, his dear "Minette," had dreamed, was revived. But it was much more complex. Religious interests which were at the bottom of it were mingled with political and financial interests, necessarily a little confused. And why? Because Christ had established His church among men who were not untouched by ambition and money. Are not compromises of the kind sure to be fatal? This was the thought of the promoters of this new *Grand Design*. Who were they to begin with? Will their names ever be known? In such intrigues is it possible to establish the part that belongs to the heads of nations, to ambassadors, to women, to diplomats great and small? There is at least one class that cannot escape the verdict of history; the negotiators or secretaries, official or unofficial, whose duty it is to do the writing. *Scripta manent*. This was the case of Edward Coleman, secretary to the Duke of York.

His political projects, as far as we can judge them from a correspondence that was purposely ambiguous, called for the extirpation of Protestantism as the state religion, the weakening, if not the dissolution of parliament, and all that by means of large sums of money to be obtained from the king of France, or in his default, the pope. In a long letter of more than six thousand words to Father de la Chaize, dating from the time that Father Saint-Germain was still living in London, Coleman made the first overtures. The answer of the prudent confessor of Louis XIV was brief: ". . . I assure you that its length did make it seem tedious. . . . When I am better informed than I am now, I will give you my opinion. I would have you think that I will never fail in good will in the service of our master, whom I honor as he deserves." Coleman had looked for something a little warmer. He wrote a second letter, in which, perhaps to emphasize his importance, he tells Father de la Chaize that he will send him a cipher, adding, with an air of mystery, that even

this precaution would not be enough. One would think that he was in the midst of a melodrama.

In the meantime, Father Saint-Germain had returned to Paris. Having lived for two years at the court of the Duke of York and on intimate terms with Coleman, he more than any one else could keep Father de la Chaize posted. Did the latter observe that in the explanations of his confrere the *Grand Design* had too many political complications? It is very probable, for one guesses from certain passages in the correspondence which then began between Saint-Germain and Coleman, that Father de la Chaize did not have full confidence in either.

For the rest, the shady bent which this correspondence affected would have aroused the suspicion of any wise and prudent man. It should have struck him at once that these letters would one day be discovered, and the deliberate obscurity in which they were veiled, far from allaying suspicion, would only accentuate it. How could these enigmatical phrases fail to give to a prejudiced mind a pretext for supposing that the *Grand Design* of these "conspirators" was to bring about the disappearance of King Charles and to put the Duke, his brother, a professed Catholic, in his place? . . . The Puritans would never fail to do so.

Meanwhile, one task would not wait. A successor must be found to Father Saint-Germain as preacher to the Duchess of York. The Duke was consulted, and as he had no fear of defying opinion, answered that he would be happy to see Father Pantouillet return. From London, February 20, 1676, an informant wrote to Modena:

Here we are in Lent without any sermons and with little hope of any. This is a great disappointment for the poor Catholics, who counted on seeing Father Saint-Germain replaced by Father Patuglieti [sic], a father who formerly gave so much satisfaction to every one. Some say that *someone* (that is, the king) wishes to show that the laws against the Catholics are being carried out, but that he will not in fact go beyond that. Only—and here we see the influence of the budgetary worries of Charles II—they mean to squeeze money out of the Catholics so as not to have to ask parliament for it.

Two months later the same informant announces that "they have begun in some places in England to treat the Catholics very severely and to confiscate their property."

Meanwhile, the Count de Ruvigny, the French ambassador at London, insisted that Paris should not be in a hurry to designate a successor to Father Saint-Germain. Besides, would it be opportune for this successor to be a Jesuit? Protestant to his finger tips, Ruvigny did not think so. Why even send a Frenchman, at a time when, following on the war with the Dutch into which Louis had dragged them, the English were so bitter against the French that it would be a hundred times better for the French not to make themselves too evident. A few weeks later an agent of Venice was taken for a Frenchman and came within an inch or two of being thrown into the Thames.

The Duke of York, nevertheless, kept to his purpose. At the beginning of June, two requests concerning Father Patouillet left London simultaneously; one from Father Mumford, confessor of James, to Father Oliva, the other from the almoner of Mary Beatrice to the interested party himself at Lyons. "As to the decision," he answered, "I place myself entirely in the hands of obedience," for which the father general, in a letter of June 30, warmly congratulated him. A few days later, Father Oliva informed Father Mumford and Father Boyer, provincial of Lyons, that he very willingly approved the choice proposed, and that the sovereign pontiff bestowed on Father Patouillet the most abundant blessings for his new ministry.

Despite these numerous letters, Father Patouillet, who was in fact already en route, got no further than Paris. Ruvigny, now replaced by Courtin, had returned to France and repeated his pleadings:

To give M. Saint-Germain a successor of French nationality would be the absolute ruin of the Catholic religion and would arouse the enemies of France. This step would be equally fatal to the Duke. The Jesuits and M. Coleman are today in fact, more than ever, the greatest object of aversion for the Protestants and also for a party of Catholics and ministers of state. Among those who belong to this same order as the confessors of the king of France and the duke of York, it is a strange bit of impudence,

it is thought, for them to throw themselves between the king and the Catholics. How can they fail to incur the suspicion of wishing to introduce an absolute authority,—[always the supposed collusion between the spiritual and the temporal]—and of urging M. Coleman to steps that will precipitate them to their destruction? And then, a still more serious thing, the responsibility will be made to fall on France. Thus M. de Ruvigny is very dissatisfied with the way things are going; for he is certain that the persecution against the duke, the Catholics and the Jesuits, and above all against France will be altogether terrible.

In the mouth of a Protestant who for many years had been frequenting the drawing-rooms and circles of his co-religionists in England, this anticipation of the future could not fail to make an impression. But the Duke of York, who knew his country even better than did de Ruvigny, judged that the religious interests included in the *Grand Design* were too important for him to abandon the party. With the idea, therefore, of respecting Puritan susceptibilities, he gave up the hope of having Father Patouillet, who was too well known in London and already compromised, but only “on the condition that Father de la Chaize name another.”

We can now understand the incertitude in which La Colombière had lived at Paray-le-Monial throughout all of August, 1676. When, in fact, Father de la Chaize fully realized the complex situation which we have just now analyzed, and that it was his duty to name the occupant of so delicate a post, we do not fancy that he hesitated. There was need of a man who, right in the midst of a voluptuous and corrupt court, could live like an ascetic, irreproachable and free from all worldly concerns, who in a society shot through with a thousand intrigues, would show himself to be free of every kind of intrigue, “prudent as the serpent,” according to the word of Christ, “but as simple as the dove.” A man unknown to the world, who was nevertheless a man of the world; a modest man who by his deliberate self-effacement would never stand in the light of the most distrustful susceptibilities; and yet a man of choice mind who by his tact and refinement, by a firm reserve with a dash of gentleness, by a penetrating psychological understanding, by his theological learning and oratorical talents, knew not only how to keep his place, but to please,

and to carry out the most diversified tasks. He must be able to help along the work of the Holy Spirit for the advancement of the kingdom of God and the conversion of souls to the true faith, without any show of proselytism. He must maintain, when occasion offered, the Catholic sympathies of a weak-willed king, dissipated and licentious, and in a manner that was continuous and by an influence that was discreet prevent the religious interests of the *Great Design* from becoming inextricably entangled with politics. And, since good judges announced violent persecutions in the not distant future, only such a priest could be sent to meet them who was strong and calm of heart, and whom neither threats nor imprisonment, nor the eventuality even of martyrdom could intimidate.

Such a man would be the same to whom Father de la Chaize had already entrusted a difficult post at Paray-le-Monial. What difference did it make that he was only thirty-three?

After a few days spent at Paris to receive necessary instructions, Father La Colombière set out for England, October 5, 1676. On the 13th he arrived at the palace of St. James, residence of the Duchess of York, whose spiritual adviser and support he was to be, with the title of preacher.

21

Preacher to the Duchess of York

THE state of insecurity and semi-dispersion in which the English Jesuits lived did not allow Father La Colombière to seek a lodging among them. From the day of his arrival in London, October 13, 1676, he lived in the apartment reserved for him in St. James Palace.

Although this residence was only a hundred and fifty years old, it already had the appearance of a historic castle. It got its name from an old hospital dedicated to St. James, the site of which it occupied.

It was built by Henry VIII in 1533, probably to serve as a residence for the fair and unhappy Anne Boleyn. Twenty-five years later Queen Mary before breathing her last sigh within its walls, had told her friends: "If you wish to know the cause of my death, open my body tomorrow and you will find Calais engraven in my heart." Charles I, after having begun to gather a fine collection of statues at St. James, seems to have lost interest in the palace; but his wife, Henrietta of France, gladly retired there for the birth of her children. It was there that Charles II was born in 1630, and his brother James in 1633. It was there that Marie de Medicis, sent into exile by Richelieu, came to seek refuge with her daughter. It was there also that the unfortunate Charles I in 1640, a few days before his condemnation, was handed over to the soldiery, and had his last visit with his children on the eve of his beheading.

Having fallen into the power of Fairfax at the age of thirteen, James had lived in St. James as a prisoner, before he escaped in the disguise of a young girl to go to fight in France under the orders of Turenne and Condé. After the restoration he returned there. It was within these walls that his first wife, Anne Hyde, died a Catholic, and here ever after, save for a few months, he constantly lived.

The interior decoration of the palace seems to have been sumptuous. In a sermon for Pentecost, Claude called attention to this wealth. To make it clear that the Holy Spirit, although teaching no new truth, nor adding anything to the truth revealed by Christ, did give, however, an understanding of them, he says:

One might say that the Holy Spirit added to the knowledge of the faith what light adds to outlines and colors. When the sun entered this palace this morning, it did not gild the alcoves, or embroider the beds, or engrave the silver, or paint the pictures with which these apartments are enriched. All that was already done before it appeared; it added neither line nor color. And yet, we saw nothing of all this. So many beautiful furnishings were to our eyes as though they had never existed. It was the light of this star which made it all visible.¹

Only a park separated St. James from the palace of Whitehall, where the king lived. From the upper windows on the east the eye

¹ *Oeuvres*, I, 442.

could already delight in the foreign caravels and ships of commerce which were then in large numbers on the Thames. On the city side there was the usual animation, noisy and brilliant, during the periods of feasts which beset a court. Every year the Lord Mayor's taking possession of the city especially drew an immense crowd of the curious, even from the neighboring counties.

The preacher's room "had a view over the square in front of the palace." Father de la Pesse, who gives us this detail, adds: "He never went near the window, he never cast his eyes over the distracting sights it offered him. He left London without having been present at any show, without having seen the least rarity of the city, without having gone even once for a walk. He visited only those who were ill, or those to whom he hoped to be of some help."

At St. James also lived Father Antonio Galli, confessor to the Duchess of York, and Father Thomas Bedingfield, of whose friendly associations with James we have spoken. But authorization to preach and to say Mass in public was given only to foreign priests and in favor of foreigners. Bedingfield who was a subject of the king of England did not have the right to teach Catholic doctrine to his fellow-countrymen. It does not seem that Claude had frequent relations with the other Jesuits of London, notable among whom were Father William Waring, superior of the College of St. Ignatius, Father Thomas Whitbread, provincial of the dispersed Jesuits, and Father d'Obeilh, a Frenchman who lived at the French embassy. Whether from a motive of prudence or a lack of time, his meetings with them were of such rare occurrence that he could write to Mother de Saumaise: "Here I have no other help than that which comes from God."

Before leaving Paray Claude had received a "memorandum" from Margaret Mary, in which we read the three following points:

1. Father La Colombière's talent is to bring souls to God: that is why the devils will work against him. Even persons consecrated to God will cause him trouble, and will not approve what he says in his sermons to bring them to God. But God's goodness will be his support in his crosses, so long as he will trust Him.

2. He ought to be gentle and sympathetic with sinners, and not use a strong hand, unless God makes it clear that he should.

3. He should be very careful never to draw the good out of its source. This is a very brief word, but it contains much. God will give him to understand it according to the application he makes of it.

Mysterious as were some of these lines, the father knew that the saint was too much enlightened by God for him to disregard her advice. He remembered her words carefully, persuaded that one day he would find light in them.

On his arrival in London Claude soon perceived that he had not set his foot on a free land. On the day following his first sermon, he wrote: "Subjects of the king of England are not permitted to go to the chapels of the ambassadors to hear Mass there, and since I have been here, men have been stationed at the doors of all these chapels, even the chapel of the Queen, to lay hands on any of the English who might come out of them. It is true that there are quite a number of French here." On leaving the royal council where this decision had been made, the Duke of York told the French ambassador, Courtin, "that the Lord Treasurer, Danby, and the Duke of Lauderdale were the authors of this resolution. It was their hope that by it they would curry favor with parliament." The decree was dated the very day of the Jesuit's arrival. One would have said that the House of Commons wished to forearm the country against the zeal of an apostle who was forced on them by the Duke of York and Versailles.

The royal decree had been communicated to the ambassadors a few days before All Saints. Coventry, secretary of state, made Courtin acquainted with it in French as clear and dry as a blade of steel:

The king being informed that his subjects go openly to hear Mass in various places, and principally to the Queen's chapel and chapels of ambassadors and other foreign ministers . . . and also that the said ambassadors permit English, Scots, and Irish priests to say Mass in their homes and chapels, and even to preach there in English, which is expressly forbidden by the laws and statutes of this kingdom . . . his Majesty . . . considering the dangerous consequences of an action which tends

so manifestly to the scandal of religion and government, has resolved to prevent such abuses and to have severe measures taken against those of his subjects who dare to disobey his orders.

As a consequence, his Excellency M. Courtin, as were all the other ambassadors, was called upon to consent to the demand that the English "be refused admittance to his mansion or chapel if they came there to hear Mass or a sermon, or be present at any other service or ceremonies of the Church of Rome."

There was another surprise for La Colombière, the bitter cold. That year the winter was exceptionally severe. Evelyn notes in his journal: "October 9: The streets are covered with sleet. Dec. 10: There fell so deep a snow as hindered us from Church. Dec. 12: To London, in so great a snow, as I remember not to have seen the like. Dec. 17: More snow falling, I was not able to get to church." Two weeks later, describing the celebration of the carnival which in England "lasted from Christmas to the day after Epiphany," Courtin wrote to Pomponne that the Thames was frozen solid, and that in several places, in order "to roast pieces of beef of from eighty to a hundred pounds," coal fires had been kindled on "beds of cinders and bricks over which spits were kept turning from morning until evening." And yet, "the heat did not cause the ice to melt."

The details will help us to understand the heroism—and also the imprudence—hidden under the assertion of La Colombière's first biographer; in London, "he would not allow a special fire to be lighted for him."

The chapel in the Palace of St. James was far from having the capacity of the churches of France where the father had so often preached. It was a rectangle of some sixty feet in length by twenty-four in width, but was crowded along the walls with two tiers of fixed seats, something like the stalls of a choir, with one rank of more modest benches. The first were reserved for persons of note. But even counting the tribune at the end, which was reserved for the Duchess of York, and the tribunes along the side, where some sixty persons could be crowded together, this chapel, outside the space required for the altar and the pulpit and the movements of

the clergy in the sanctuary, could hardly accommodate more than one hundred and fifty persons.

One point seems certain. The prohibition against British subjects attending Catholic chapels was not strictly enforced in the chapel of the Duchess of York. In his correspondence Claude frequently speaks of English men and women who were present at his sermons. Outside of the places of clandestine worship, this small chapel, thanks to the elite who could gain admission to it, was the principal center of Catholic activity in London. A few months after his arrival, Claude wrote: "I am not unknown in this city. A man who preaches publicly ought not to be afraid to pass for what he is, since he is making so loud a profession of it." If he asks his correspondents to omit the title "Père" in their letters to him, it is merely "from fear that if some Protestant should see it, he would toss it into the river. That is the worst that could happen."

It was for this very limited assistance that Claude was going to be prodigal of his strength to the point of exhaustion. He preached all the Sundays and feast days throughout the year, and several times during the week in Advent and Lent. He worked hard at his sermons, writing them out entirely with the greatest care and exactness, as though they were for a cathedral audience.

He began with the feast of All Saints. He had been living at St. James for almost two months and had time enough to appreciate the virtues of Mary Beatrice. In a few days he wrote to Mother de Saumaise: "The Duchess of York is a princess of deep piety. She receives communion every week, and sometimes even oftener. Every day she makes a half-hour of mental prayer." Later, Claude confided the following to his elder brother: "I serve a princess who is entirely good in every sense of the word; her piety is very exemplary and her meekness very great." Thus, it was not a vain compliment which he addressed to his royal hearer when, before describing the happiness of paradise, "the holy city of the Blessed," he declared:

However good may be the intentions of your Royal Highness, whatever care I have resolved to take to second them, I would expect little fruit from all my efforts if I did not know that they were sustained by your good example. Bad Christians would defend themselves, perhaps, only

too well against all the reasons I could give them to convince them of their duty. But what answer can they make to the example of a princess who, in the flower of her age, in a station where the majority of men fancy that everything is permitted them, with all the advantages of body and of mind which usually inspire a love of the world, declares herself for all to hear to be on the side of piety, and practices all its exercises with so much exactness and so much fervor? Besides, Madame, speaking before a person as irreproachable as you, I would not be held to all these regards which prudence demands that we have sometimes for princes who are given to vice and disorder. There is not a single vice against which I could not carry on open war, for there is not a single one which your own conduct does not condemn. I will be able to say whatever the Spirit of God shall deign to inspire me to say against the disorders of our age. One would never believe that my reproaches were directed to your Royal Highness. Thus, Madame, the word of God will not be bound by your presence. I will not hide from you the wounds of the sinner. I will make them appear even more shameful by contrasting them with your virtue.²

La Colombière could speak like that without fear of contradiction. An Anglican bishop, a close friend of Charles and the Duke of York, confirmed this encomium, and in spite of some slight partisan reservations, completes it on a number of points:

The Duchess of York was a gracious person of considerable beauty, gifted with high intelligence and refinement. During the reign of Charles II, she behaved in a manner so obliging and appeared so innocent and good that she won all hearts who came near her and made so deep an impression on them that they had to modify their thought in her regard, when she became Queen. By her charm, this young Italian was able to disarm the prejudices of persons, even the oldest and most jealous, as well at court as in the country. Only occasionally did she allow a tendency to mockery to appear, which was attributed to her youth and to a spirit which lacked worldly experience. Avoiding the appearance of an exaggerated zeal and an excessive interference in affairs, she gave herself to innocent enjoyment, and was loved by all as long as she was duchess.

She became queen in 1685, and after a few weeks of astonishing success, Mary Beatrice brought upon her own head a large share of

² *Oeuvres*, I, 29-30.

the Puritan wrath which was aimed at her husband. At the end of a reign of three years, she was exiled to France, and whether at the court of Saint-Germain, or in her retreat at Chaillot, won from Bourdaloue, the confidant of her conscience, this avowal: "I do not know any one so holy or more worthy of veneration. Since I have come to know her, I beat my breast and tell myself: 'This queen will one day judge us.'" And Louis XIV, in a few words, pronounced this encomium: "This is what a queen ought to be in body and mind, keeping her court with dignity."

To the end of her long life Mary Beatrice remained grateful to Father La Colombière for the direction he gave to her spiritual life. Experience with a wicked world had blunted her spontaneity, and she admitted to Mother Louise Croiset, superior of the Visitation at Chaillot, that since Father La Colombière she had not fully "opened her heart to any one," because "she had not found any one to give her such sound advice in matters of conscience."

Among other counsels, he made me give much thought to the need I had of becoming simpler in my interior life, so as to have eyes for no one but God, in spite of the multiplicity of things which surrounded me; that God wished of me this willingness to commit myself entirely to Him and everything concerning me, to be used as He wished; that I should regard less what I had done than what I should do, for this would make me supple and pliable to the orders of God's providence and the events which He might wish to ordain. Even in those things by which He might be offended—and in the court of Charles II, as these happenings were numerous in the hatreds that were rife there during his reign—I must not allow myself to indulge my impatience, but only pray God to put an end to the evil.

To become simple, to behold only God, and refer everything to God. Here we find the essence of the direction which Claude gave to chosen souls, who were sometimes a little timid. For a Visitandine, living among the trials of the cloister, as for a princess amid the tribulations of a court, it was the same.

To leave oneself in God's hands. . . . During Claude's stay in London, the Duchess of York had occasion to do so valiantly with regard to her first son, the Duke of Cambridge. On the very day he

was born, November 18th, she had sent Innocent XI an expression of her joy, and added: "I hope that the divine Majesty will deign to preserve him for me, to allow me to exercise the acts of my respectful obedience to your Holiness by bringing him up in our holy religion to which the very best of my zeal will always be consecrated." This resolution had all the more merit, that parliament had often manifested its intention "of having the children of Catholics instructed by Protestants," with this proviso that if one day "the monarchy should fall into the hands of a Catholic, his children would not be exempt from the general law." Alas, the child so much desired, in whose cradle were nestled so many fine hopes, lived only a month. Without delay, Mary Beatrice wrote to her brother, Charles of Modena: "You can imagine my sorrow; my joy had been so great when he was born! All the sharper is the grief his loss causes me. God knows what He does. . . . I would have been too happy if this son had not been taken away from me." Shortly after Innocent XI, having sent a letter of condolence to the parents, the Duke of York in turn gave expression to feelings of a "profound resignation to God's holy will."³

In the course of her long exile in France these days of mourning, despite their bitter memories, could never wrest the slightest complaint from the heart of Mary Beatrice. One day at Chaillot, she heard reported this remark of Henrietta Maria of France, the ill-starred wife of Charles I: "The title of queen is always noble, and I never fail to be satisfied with it." "Is it possible?" she cried. "Myself, I have never felt that joy. I never tasted happiness in England, except between my fifteenth and twentieth year. But in those five years I had always been pregnant, and I lost all my children. Judge

³ Vatican Archives, *Lettere dei Principi*, vol. CIV. At the time of the elevation of Cardinal Odescalchi to the papal throne as Innocent XI, the Duke of York had already written him: "I am deeply disappointed that circumstances do not permit me publicly to show my zeal for the Church" (Letter of May 18, 1677). When a few months later his eldest daughter, Mary, married the Prince of Orange, he excused himself very delicately to the pope: "Fearing that so sudden a resolution might have caused some anxiety to Your Holiness, I must say that although it is my own daughter, I have not been able to prevent this absolute and imperative act of the king, my brother and lord" (Letter of November 19, 1677).

of my happiness." But that did not prevent her from adding: "My husband, the king, and myself would have been desolate had we to bring our children up Protestants. We found some consolation in seeing them die young. King James said: 'Look, until we are able to bring up our children in the true religion, not one will live.'"⁴

Such religious fervor might warrant the belief that this princess of nineteen years brought the life of the convent to St. James. But this would be a mistake. Evelyn notes in his *Journal*, December 4, 1676: "I saw the great ball danced by all the gallants and ladies at the Duchess of York's." And on the 11th of March of the following year, Courtin wrote to Pomponne: "Monday there was a ball at the Duchess of York's which lasted until five in the morning."

Her piety did not prevent her from being responsive to the attraction of the world. When Louis XIV made her a gift of magnificent diamond pendants, she did not fail to write him: "Sire, I am infinitely obliged to your Majesty for these extraordinary marks of kindness which I have received from you through Monsieur Courtin, your ambassador. I leave it to him to make known to your Majesty the joy I felt."

But she reproaches herself for allowing herself to be ensnared by these trifles:

"Although this is the feast of the Ascension," she confesses to a Visitandine of Modena, "my heart is so buried in the mire of the earth that I have not been able to make it rise. I hope, my dear Sister, that with God's help and your prayers, I will be able to disinter it and detach it from these miseries and earthly vanities."

In the midst of the whirlwind which enveloped her, like the exiles of Babylon, she could not repress the regret she felt for the sweet Sion of other days: "Pray God for me," she writes to Mother Balland,

⁴ *Mémoires historiques relatifs à S. M. la reine d'Angleterre, femme de Jacques, II*, 1713. Archives Nationales, K. 1302, n^o. 220. The eldest of the children of the Duchess of York was Catherine Laura, born January 19, 1675, died the following October 3rd; the second, Isabella, born August 28, 1676, died March 2, 1682. Then came the Duke of Cambridge, born November 18, 1677, dying December 22nd of the same year; then a third daughter, Charlotte Mary, born August 15, 1682, dying the following October 6th. After becoming queen, Mary Beatrice had a second son, James, the only one of her children who survived, James III, a king in exile, who died in 1765.

"for I am in a great dryness. I do not find any longer, I assure you, the consolations of my little room at Modena. . . . We are at the moment in the octave of our Lady's Assumption. I am trying to make a crown for her of some practices of virtue, but, dear God, how few and paltry are my practices!"

Even the trial of persecution did not seem to be enough to give her the spirit of prayer. But when the impostures of Titus Oates had brought a number of victims to Tyburn, and threatened the life of her husband, she wrote: "Dear mother, while these afflictions are making others better, I am colder and lazier than ever, miserable that I am. And what is more, I think that I myself am the cause, being intent on all the vanities of this world which, even though it seems contemptible, has so many charms that I cannot help loving it, while towards God who is so lovable I am indifferent."

Mother Balland, having wished one day for her former pupil, "a heart all aflame with the love of God after the example of the great St. Clair of Montfalcone," Mary Beatrice answered: "Oh, I should think myself happy to feel the thousandth part of that fervor! . . . But, dear God, at the moment, all I find in my heart is self-love and frivolity. . . ."

Of all the letters of the Duchess of York to the superior at Modena, this last is the only one which dates with any certainty from the time during which Father La Colombière was living in London. This is certainly not pure accident. As long as she had her holy director close at hand, why should we be surprised if she is less inclined to seek help and advice from afar? The presence of La Colombière was not immaterial to the growth of the virtues which Bourdaloue and Louis XIV were at one in recognizing in the exiled queen. A saint had passed her way. But La Colombière evidently did not limit his attention to the soul of his royal penitent. It is to a much wider field of apostolic endeavor that we are now going to accompany him.

Preacher at St. James

ALTHOUGH Catholics were numerous in London, La Colombière learned on his arrival that for a year there had not been in the city a public instruction in the catechism. "The word of God is hardly ever heard in this country, so that when one comes to preach, he cannot fail to be very welcome."¹

Before long Claude felt himself penetrated with a deep love for the faithful of this nation. "It is a great pity to see how they are persecuted and the little help they have for their spiritual life. . . . It is surely a church in great desolation. . . . There are no Daughters of St. Mary here, and much less any Sisters Alacoque." And yet, if they had only a fraction of the religious advantages which are to be found in some corners of France, "I think there would be many saints among them."²

His efforts are going to be directed to bring about this sanctification; his one aim was the good of souls: quite the opposite qualities of the preacher, whom La Bruyère scoffed at, "who pleased some and displeased others," but "agreed with all on one point, that as he did not try to make them better, they did not think of becoming so."

His audience was composed in great part of people of the court, French especially and Italian, a miscellaneous group of high society, frequently the frivolous. Despite the decrees of parliament, the English crowded there usually in large numbers, and on certain days there were even some Protestants.

Although he was in a land of heretics he showed nothing of the spirit of controversy in their regard, much less was he polemical. He breathed good will. Aware of his role as teacher, he wished first of all to instruct. Recalling the marvels accomplished "in ten years'

¹ To Mother de Saumaise, November 12, 1676 (VI, 323).

² To the same, November 20, 1676 (VI, 326).

time," by St. Francis Xavier, "in the greater part of the Orient," he said:

Why is it, I ask myself, that a hundred preachers cannot do today in one city what a single man did in so little time in a whole world? Dear God, is it not the fault of those to whom You have entrusted the sacred ministry of Your word? Do they not waste their time in displaying a learning that is vain and obscure, instead of adapting themselves to our ignorance? Christians would have need, some even would ardently desire that some one teach them what they do not know. They would be carried out of themselves, if some one told them of the Redeemer, explained His mysteries to them, threw some light on the more important points of their belief, in a word, gave them bread to eat, and according to the expression of Scripture, served them food that was solid.³

The first purpose of the preacher was to satisfy this desire. When La Colombière died some notes were found among his papers. They were a kind of "essay," varying from four to twelve pages, on the most different subjects. They were improvisations which the father dashed down, warm and vibrant, under the impression of some experience or inspiration from prayer. Transcribed without order, they were published under the general title *Réflexions chrétiennes*. From fragments which we have already quoted, especially on the education of children and on the friendship of Jesus Christ, we can note their impulsive and direct turn, stripped of all rhetoric.⁴ Without immediate thought of an audience, Claude expressed in them his unadorned thought for himself. They are sketches in lines that are realistic, sometimes a little coarse, which he kept to be toned down as occasion offered for use in his preaching.⁵

³ *For the last days of the carnival*, III, 195.

⁴ Cf. the second part of Chapter 7 and the end of Chapter 11.

⁵ See, for example, what he writes of sinners in search of incessant pleasure: "They who think themselves happy are as silly as they who think that a woman who always smells of ambergris and musk is very healthy. These perfumes are often remedies against the foul odor of a cancer or a decayed lung, to which one is obliged to have recourse, if one is not to be forced to smell this corruption and infect others. Thus, for these persons who go from pleasure to pleasure . . . there are perfumes to prevent them from being choked by the stench of the vapors which the foulness of their conscience is continually exhaling" (*De la*

To get a complete idea of La Colombière's teaching we must consult besides his ninety *Sermons* or *Méditations*, the forty chapters of these *Réflexions chrétiennes*.⁶

From this collection we could make up almost a complete treatise on religion. The truths which we must believe about God, Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit, the Church, the Blessed Virgin, our last end, are there set forth. Precepts of morality, the principal points of Christian perfection as well as the means which have been placed at man's disposal for his sanctification, prayer, and the sacraments.

Such a teaching explains in large measure the influence which La Colombière exercised. If one were to think that this vast program represents the work of two years only, taken on in the midst of multiplied occupations, one must admire the power of work and the energy it supposes, even taking into account the preparation which his ten months of preaching in Lyons afforded him.

This bird's-eye view is necessary for another reason. To omit it would be to run the risk of misunderstanding some of La Colombière's assertions, made as they are in a tone that is trenchant and absolute. He could hardly help it, because of the fragmentary character of his teaching. Limited by the length of his sermon, the preacher, concerned with a vigorous presentation of a particular aspect of his doctrine, will, for lack of time, often overlook a complementary aspect that is essential, in the expectation of finishing his explanation the following week. To have his complete thought on the point, the reader of today must run through a number of sermons at a stretch. One who might wish, for example, to stop short with the sermon on the requirements of a good confession, would hold La Colombière to be a rigorist, and might be in danger of thinking that all of his own confessions were invalid. He should complete his instruction with the sermons that follow on the mercy of God

Conscience, V, 195). If one wishes to see how Claude makes use in his sermons of notes previously taken, he can compare among several other examples, *Réflexions sur l'aumône* (V, 381-89) with the *Sermon* on the same subject (239-280).

⁶ *Réflexions*, in the Charrier edition, fill 318 pages, V, 121-439.

and on trust in God.⁷ The same holds true, as we shall see, for Holy Communion.

These antagonisms are found in the very interior of the discourses. Generally, they include two parts which the preacher sets forth in a manner so antithetical, sometimes paradoxical, that one might be inclined to say that they contradicted each other. For example, on the matter of bad habits, he wishes to forewarn his hearers against "two very pernicious illusions," with which the demon tries to mislead us. He says: "I want you to see in the first point that whoever allows himself to fall into a bad habit will not get out of it at will; and in the second, that whoever does allow himself to, will get out of it if he really wills it."⁸ A way of catching the attention and of making easy the effort of memory, but the result is a piece of rhetoric which is not free of artifice.

This cult of antithesis leads at times to distinctions which the author is himself surprised sometimes to find rather subtle. In the sermon from which we have just now quoted, to make it clear that a bad habit imposes on the soul "a free necessity that urges the will, but does not excuse it," Claude makes this comment on a word of St. Bernard's: "You not only wish the evil that you do, but you wish it intensely, since you wish it necessarily. One must indeed wish something, when one cannot but wish it. Now, wherever there is will there is choice, and consequently, liberty."

He adds: "This reasoning, although irrefutable, seems to be obscure to those who are not accustomed to the subtleties of the Schoolmen."⁹ There follow, happily, some penetrating psychological analyses, which cause the obscurity to disappear.

Before being given in England a large number of the sermons had been given in France. Such as have come down to us bear the traces of changes made by the editor between the two redactions. When we read, for example, that at Christmas time "the priests were overwhelmed by the crowds of penitents, the churches too small to contain the number of true adorers, and the days too short for the fervor

⁷ *Oeuvres*, IV, 117-216.

⁸ *De l'habitude vicieuse*, IV, 95.

⁹ *Ibid.*, IV, 108.

of their unwearied devotion," there can be no question of a city like London, where the Catholics had no church to use. This "unwearied devotion" is at Lyons. But when we see, a moment later, "the carnival begin on the very day of the Epiphany . . . the squares and the crossroads filled with bad Christians, who expose to the eyes of heretics the shame they do our religion," we are forced to think of the banks of the Thames.¹⁰

In his *Réflexions sur l'Eloquence*, Father Rapin finds fault with those preachers who draw "false portraits," in which the hearer "does not recognize himself. What they say is lost; no one takes it for himself. They preach to good men as though they were scoundrels, they speak to courtiers as though they were good men." La Colombière, whose appreciation for these *Réflexions* went to the point of copying them out by hand, did not fall into this fault. He followed the advice of Rapin: "Nothing touches the mind more than the pictures one makes for it, when the pictures are well made."¹¹ Here his psychological insight does him excellent service. With what sharpness of view he unmasks the makeshifts in which a worldly conscience wraps itself!

There are persons who think themselves delicate to the point of scrupulosity, who omit accusing themselves of their principal faults, because they are not able to make up their minds to believe that they are faults. For example, one owes a merchant, a servant, workmen; one owes others from whom he has formerly borrowed, or taken something belonging to him. And yet one does not wish to lower his expenditures so as to be able to pay this debt. Or, although he could pay it at once, he puts it off to another time, thinking that it is enough to have the mind to pay it. You deceive yourself. It is a manifest injustice, and yet you go through torture to tell the sins in which it is hard to find matter for absolution, and you don't say a word of those things which are altogether essential. There are whole families living at variance, who don't even wish to hear reconciliation spoken of. In other respects they are good people, but they have persuaded their consciences that they have reasons for not seeing, for everlastingly complaining of each other, and of making these reasons known everywhere. They confess it twice, three times, four

¹⁰ *Fourth sermon for the last days of the carnival*, III, 219.

¹¹ *Réflexions sur l'Eloquence*, XVI.

times, but in the end, as they are well aware that they have no desire to amend, they no longer confess it and bring themselves to think that they have no obligation to confess it. How many persons given to a spiritual life are subject to acts of impatience out of which they pretend to earn merit before God; who, far from accusing themselves of the disturbance they cause in their homes, wish to make their disappointment pass as an effect of their vigilance and of the care they take of their servants. How many zealous persons, under the pretext of having religion and justice at heart, . . . under pretext of consoling themselves with the goods coming from the misfortune of those who perish, give themselves up to an inhuman slander which they prefer to color and disguise in this way rather than resist the inclination they have to this vice.¹²

It is not a conventional audience "of any time or any land" that La Colombière is addressing, but the very definite audience in St. James, in which people of the court and the middle class predominate. He knew "that apostles were not the style at this time, and that people preferred to consult false prophets."¹³ But that was nothing to stop him. He spoke out clearly and fearlessly. The love of entertainment, the desire to please, and to shine so filled the thought of most of them that the preacher had to flog them ceaselessly. He pursued them with a biting satire. Unforgettable is the portrait of this "young person who, invited to a ball, goes through a thousand discomforts through the whole day, a thousand tortures."

She suffers when she is laced to the point of choking, when she is singed, when she is pricked, when her hair is drawn, and all that to appear a little more attractive for the space of three or four hours. Of what would this same person not be capable, if she gave a little thought to the fact that a few years of retirement, of modesty, of penance could give an everlasting beauty to her countenance, correct all her faults, put her beyond the reach of the insults and the parching wind of old age; that here it is not merely a matter of a meeting of relatives or of some lords and ladies, not merely a matter of a banquet or an evening's entertainment, but of life immortal, which we must spend in the most illustrious and most numerous company.¹⁴

¹² *De la Confession*, IV, 125 ff.

¹³ *Du jugement universel*, III, 345.

¹⁴ *Pour la jour de l'Assomption*, II, 295.

On the same subject, we can read in *Réflexions chrétiennes*,¹⁵ a pen picture of morals too long for insertion here, but which would not be out of place in the *Caractères* of La Bruyère.

The mad excesses which Christians too often allow themselves at the time of the carnival, under the pretext that it is only for a fortnight, and that one will reform after it, stirred La Colombière to vigorous complaint. By such conduct a Christian "brings dishonor on his profession."

What! dear ladies, spend five or six hours of your time in dressing and painting your faces only to go into a group to lay "snares against the chastity of men and to serve as a torch for the demon to enkindle everywhere the fires of lust; to remain whole nights exposed to the eyes and the coaxing of young fools and a whole regiment of the city's rakes; to use all that is most dangerous in art and nature to attract their looks and vanquish their spirit; to disguise your person and your sex, so as to be ashamed of nothing; to romp from quarter to quarter in a stage costume, with the impudence of actresses, so as to be seen by all eyes, and in the space of a day yourselves to see all the faces in a city; to join excess in food and drink to the excesses of lust and wantonness; not to be satisfied with talk that blackens the name of the neighbor, but to go so far as to speak words that scandalize him; in a word, to add to the vices of women all the vices and disorders of men. Can these in truth be the amusements of Christians? ¹⁶

The preacher does not ignore the excuses which parents make to authorize such parties: "Our children have to find a way to get established!" No doubt. But is this the way you will succeed in doing it?

Unhappy mothers, mothers less than human, murderesses, who deck your daughters out as they did once upon a time the victims set aside for death . . . have you desired them only to corrupt them? Have you brought them into the world only to damn them? 'Who would think of them?' you ask. God, in any case, will think of them, if men do not. But is it possible that the designs which God may have on your family can be achieved only by such abominable means? . . . I do not blame you for

¹⁵ *De la vaine gloire*, V, 256-260.

¹⁶ *Pour les derniers jours du carnaval*, III, 223, 232. La Colombière has no less than four sermons on this subject.

wishing to make your daughter happy in this life. But you are indeed to be pitied, if you think that you must endanger her salvation, and your own, your eternity and hers, for so empty, so absurd a happiness, a happiness which must last but a moment! ¹⁷

Moreover, when it is a matter no longer of amusement, but of arranging an engagement, men "always prefer virtue to profligacy."

Men do not want to have anything to do with the vicious, except for a vicious purpose. A profligate might wish to have a vain and coquettish girl for a mistress, but if he is thinking of marriage, do not doubt that he will try to choose the most modest and retiring. A drunkard will associate with those given to drink, but if he can he will entrust his affairs, his home, his person, only to those who are sober. Finally, a gambler will always seek the company of another gambler, but he will not give him his daughter and her inheritance.¹⁸

How many unhappy marriages are prepared in this way! In a sermon for the feast of St. Joseph, which was first preached at Lyons, La Colombière said:

O but this vain and coquettish girl will pay dearly by a long and cruel servitude for the faults which she is now committing and which she makes others commit! She thinks that by dint of dressing, of exhibiting herself, or parading her beauty, of appearing to be agreeable, being sweet-tempered, she will the sooner find a home. I am of the opposite opinion. These are the means, if I am not mistaken, to find ready lovers, —but a husband, only very late and perhaps never. . . . It is certain that this is not the way to find a good one. . . .

This man who allows himself to be dazzled by this or that beauty, and who without examining her character, her education, her personal morals, wishes to marry her absolutely, and often against the advice of his friends, this man does not reflect that this beauty is not immortal, and that nevertheless, he is binding himself until death. Let us suppose that her beauty lasts for ten years; you will perhaps have forty or fifty to live with her. So that if she hasn't something in her mind, or her soul, to hold you after the loss of her looks you will have to suffer for the space of thirty or forty years. It will be like keeping a corpse in your home.¹⁹

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, III, 244.

¹⁸ *Pour le jour de la Transfiguration*, II, 90.

¹⁹ *Oeuvres*, II, 419 ff.

In these worldly gatherings the fashion of flirtation takes such a hold of hearts that they bring it even into the churches, in the presence "of our tabernacles, were the body of our Lord reposes."

One would say, seeing the care you spend on decking yourself out, that you were the divinity of the temple; that you were thinking of enticing His adorers away from God, to draw their worship as well as their gaze to yourself. . . .

What a misfortune, lovable Jesus, if when Christians come to your churches to feed upon that Flesh which inspires purity and modesty. . . . they find there objects which awaken their passions and which enkindle the fires of lust in their hearts! Whither must Your elect, then, retire henceforth? What? Will they everywhere find this world which they are fleeing from? To avoid it, will they be forced to forbid themselves our churches, as they have been obliged to give up the theatre? . . .

Then suddenly this parting bolt, which a sincere Christian woman would carry away fixed like an arrow in her heart. "To dress oneself up to go to church, is as though Magdalen had resumed her jewels to be present at the crucifixion. . . ." ²⁰

So extreme is the sham in the world that moves about La Colombière, so normal is the state it constitutes, that it is from the conventions and make-up of the theater that he draws the elements of his comparisons, which for us are so unexpected. On the feast of the Purification: "Do you want to know," he asks, "what it is really to love purity? Represent to yourself a woman in love with her own charms and infatuated with her own beauty. . . ." A strange way indeed to begin his explanation. But the attention is pricked and the sleepy come awake. The preacher continues:

Not only does she see with self-complacence that nature on this point has distinguished her from the common run of women, but she bestows cares beyond our power of expression for the preservation of the graces she has received. What does she not do to protect this complexion, now from sunburn, now from extremes of cold? What does she not do to maintain it, to keep it in its bloom, to make it if possible immortal? . . . One hair out of place, a little more pallor than usual, a little less luster and plumpness, a pimple, a swelling, throws her into despair.

²⁰ *Réflexions chrétiennes. De l'irrévérence dans les Eglises*, V, 242 ff.

It is the same almost with a person who is truly chaste. It is not enough for her to avoid guilt and the last stages of disorder. She would never forgive herself for a word or a look that was even slightly free. The least voluntary thoughts, the most transient, cause her horror. In this matter everything seems essential to her. This fashionable gossip, these scandalous stories, which are today the ordinary subjects of conversation, are enough to drive her from such gatherings, and if she had no other subject to talk about, find her delight in solitude.

O how far removed is she from the vanity of those whose head-dress and attire seem to be made only to light the fires of impurity!

Finally, is this not a personal recollection which La Colombière evokes when he adds:

When I enter the room of such a person, my brethren I am not afraid of letting my eye turn in every direction indifferently. . . . Suggestive shapes, nudities are not to be found there, neither on the furnishings nor in the pictures. Even in her own portrait, if she has one, there is nothing that is not chaste, that does not make her modesty known, even to the features of her countenance. Even in a painting, she is afraid to be seen in a condition which might arrest the eyes of the lewd, or frighten those of the most chaste. This is what I think of the love of chastity.²¹

Living among Protestants who "find fault with our penance as an abuse, who make a display of eating meat on days when the Church forbids it," the Catholics of London were in great danger of allowing themselves to be drawn into a disregard of fast and abstinence. "One who has scrupled all his life to eat eggs won't stay more than two weeks in this city but will begin to eat meat like the others when he sees the surprising ease with which some Catholics eat it."²²

Other excesses were naturally added to these. The very title of which a club of profligates boasted, "*Academia Combibonum*,"²³ would give some idea of them. Claude reacted vigorously against this loose living. "If Jesus Christ," he asked one day, "were visibly to enter your home, would you wish to have Him come upon you eating meat in this holy season [it was Lent], and would you not

²¹ *Pour le jour de la Purification*, II, 243-46.

²² *Du jeûne et de l'abstinence du carême*, IV, 342-52.

²³ "Academy of Fellow-Drinkers." *Annual Letters* of the English Jesuits, 1678.

want the remains of a Huguenot meal carried out of His sight?"²⁴ At another time, having offered the example of the Christians of Constantinople who in a time of famine, although Justinian had the butcher shops opened, were unwilling to break the law of the Church, the preacher suddenly interrupts himself.

'They were good people,' some may say, 'these Christians of whom you speak. For myself, I know well that I am not made that way.' I well believe you! I haven't any doubt that you would have anticipated any dispensation to gorge yourselves with the meats forbidden by the Church. But you who speak like that, have you any religion?²⁵ ..

The preacher at St. James fixed very clearly the duties of each, whatever was his social rank. All the inequalities and injustices of this earth will be fully corrected on high. "Poor people, you who are here the refuse of the world and the slaves of the rich, have a little patience. In the Holy City things will look different. There your birth will do you no harm, and these great ones who now despise you will for the most part have a rank there that will be lower than yours."²⁶

There was, however, no out-and-out rigorism. La Colombière did not condemn every kind of amusement. He asserts that "there are some that are praiseworthy: for men of letters . . . certain readings, learned conversations, witty talk, which sometimes are more profitable than more serious studies." "For army men . . . hunting, tournaments, running at the ring, games with the bow and arrow and the arquebus."²⁷ "I don't mean that one is obliged to flee the cities or shut himself up in a cloister. There is a middle ground between the desert and high society which I do not think less of than the desert itself."²⁸

It is against other pleasures that the preacher directs his attack. And when we know the scandals that vaunted themselves at the court of Charles II, we will not be surprised at his energy. How can

²⁴ *De la sainte Eucharistie*, II, 34.

²⁵ *Du jeûne et de l'abstinence du carême*, IV, 344, 355.

²⁶ *Pour la fête de tous les saints*, I, 40.

²⁷ *Premier sermon pour les derniers jours du carnaval*, III, 133.

²⁸ *De la Fuite du Monde*, III, 460.

we find exaggerated the picture he draws of their pernicious corruption? "You know better than I do, my Christian hearers, the impiety, the scandal, the lascivious and lawless love that constitute today the greater part of the conversations of men and women. There is luxury and dissoluteness almost at every meal. . . . No longer has any one a taste for pleasures that are not seasoned with some guilt."²⁹

Certain letters from the French ambassadors at London would furnish singular commentaries on this statement. We see there even the Duchess de Mazarin, she "who had come to the English court like Arminde in the camp of Godefroy, admired by men and envied by women,"³⁰ tolerate at her home "gaily enough and with much politeness" strange sights and intrigues. Courtin thought himself obliged, out of respect for Pomponne, the respectable father of a family, to abbreviate the description of them. "I would not have stopped at that point with M. de Lionne. But I must be more prudent with you."³¹ Another time, having noted that the ladies were not having any boating parties with the gentlemen on the Thames, he adds: "It is the only regularity that they observe in this country. There is much looseness in all the rest of their conduct."³² When La Colombière said: "Sometimes only one wicked man is enough to debauch all the youth of a city: one woman has frequently poisoned a whole court,"³³ was it very difficult for the audience to narrow down these imputations and murmur names? The actress Nell Gwynne, and the little Bretonne Louise de Kéroualle, the "French

²⁹ *Premier sermon pour les derniers jours du carnaval*, III, 121.

³⁰ Letter from Ruigny to Pomponne, January 20, 1676.

³¹ Letter from Courtin to Pomponne, January 18, 1677. To stigmatize the shamelessness which reigned at Whitehall, Arthur Bryant is not afraid in the title of a chapter in the life of Charles II, which he then develops at length, to characterize the royal court by a word that is painful and scathing: The Court of Cuckolds (*King Charles II*, Part 2, Chapter 5). In an article on Louise de Kéroualle, appearing in the *Revue des Deux-Mondes*, March, 1903, A. Lichtenberger says: "Between the court of Charles II and that of Louis XIV there is an interval which separates the cynical debauch of the first from the majestic voluptuousness of the second."

³² Letter from Courtin to Pomponne, July 2, 1676.

³³ *De la Fuite du Monde*, III, 459.

Delilah" who had become Duchess of Portsmouth, then divided between them the favors of Charles II. Evelyn had occasion to visit the splendid apartment of the latter in Whitehall, and noted in his *Journal*, September 10, 1675: "It is furnished with unheard of luxury, ten times the richness and glory of the Queen's."³⁴

With still greater daring, La Colombière made some allusions to the falls from grace, sad examples of which too many Catholics, even in the court, had given after the *Test Act*: "How many subterfuges daily bring men to yield God's interests to those of the state, openly to disregard all the most sacred laws, and persuade themselves that religion itself is only a department of politics which ought to adapt itself to the times and the demands of temporal affairs!"³⁵

To stigmatize these disorders he resorts neither to diatribe nor indictment. There is nothing of Savonarola about La Colombière. He knows that prudence demands that one be silent, even sometimes in the face of evident abuses. "There is danger of increasing the fire by our efforts to put it out. God grant that we have fewer examples of this truth. God grant that the evils caused by the severity which has been used to bring princes to a sense of their disorder were confined to their persons or their century!" And this is why the apostle has so lively a compassion for the great. They are in such peril! "People do not dare tell them the truth. Even preachers are obliged to observe great moderation in their presence . . . because, since they are known to everybody, however little their faults are noted, every one knows that it is of them one is speaking, so that they are reduced to confusion, and that would be a very mischievous way of converting them." Thus it comes about that "the great must be their own censors . . . and they must remember that what they find blame-

³⁴ Cf. Forneron, *Louise de Kéroualle, Duchesse de Portsmouth* (1886). The book begins thus: "Louise de Kéroualle is the little Breton girl who is responsible for our getting our Flanders, our Franche-Comté. One should give everything to one's country, everything save honor. The Breton girl made no reserves. Her memory is struck with infamy among the English, who do not forgive her for having held England in her hands for almost fifteen years" (beginning with 1670).

³⁵ *Premier sermon pour la fête de tous les saints*, I, 21.

worthy in the behavior of others is still more blameworthy in them, and that they actually do incur more blame.”³⁶

These manifold features bring out the likeness of an orator who is strangely attractive. He is a man of the just medium, joining daring to wisdom, a mind in perfect balance, a classic of the age of Bossuet. He has a share in the “controlled fearlessness” which the teacher of the Dauphin liked to recognize as the sign of power. . . .³⁷

This balance also appeared in the form of the sermon. La Colombière was conscious of lacking in delivery and voice, and perhaps even in the evocative power of the imagination, that captivating impetuosity which has been a characteristic of so many missionaries. He lacked the *stout lungs* of the tribune. Speaking of the Last Judgment, he “left to those who had received from God a stronger eloquence,” to describe the terrible preliminaries, or its external pomp and circumstance.³⁸

Claude’s panegyrists have thought it their duty to seek excuses for his not having “put the finishing touches to his sermons.” Father de Colonia thinks that his premature death was the sole cause.³⁹ Earlier Father de la Pesse had written: “We must admit that his important occupations did not permit him to give them all the charm and polish which he was capable of giving them.”⁴⁰

But was La Colombière in truth very much concerned about these charms and embellishments? Humanist of a broad culture, he evoked here and there some memory of antiquity when he saw in it a means of clarifying his thought. “Anxious to find a familiar and striking image of this tireless Eucharistic love which never grew weary of falling into the horrors of souls full of sacrilege,” we hear him “quote two whole verses which picture Aeneas plunging into burning Troy in his search for Creusa.”⁴¹ Such liberties are rare. He never yields

³⁶ *Réflexions chrétiennes. Des Grands*, V, 412 ff.

³⁷ *Discours sur l’histoire universelle*, III^e partie, ch. iii.

³⁸ *De jugement universel*, III, 345.

³⁹ *Histoire littéraire de la ville de Lyon*, II, 750.

⁴⁰ *Préface*, *op. cit.*, xxxi.

⁴¹ Louis Théolier, *Virgile, le Maître de coeur*, Études, November, 1930. The two verses are quoted in the sermon, *Pour le jour du Corps de Dieu*, II, 6.

to the craze, so common at the time, of a vain display of erudition with which his audience has nothing in common.

As though it were a disgrace for his hero to use what he considered vulgar language, Father Charrier has frequently corrected the text of the first editors, although restoring it in a note. Thus, he constantly replaces the term "idiots" by the word *les ignorants*. The term "idiots" is today almost trivial, but in the seventeenth century, taken in its original Greek meaning, it meant simply the "profane" [that is, the uninformed or ignorant] in opposition to the initiated or the learned. Claude was not so particular. He leaves paraphrases to the sensitive, and, without departing from the correctness and elegance demanded, but without any false nobility or affectation, he applies to objects the common names which the language of every day life attributes to them. He speaks of "skirts" (*jupes*) and "ornaments" (*garnitures*), a "shirt" (*chemise*), and "filthy" (*sales*), "animals," of a man with a mind that is "bottled up" (*bouché*), of the Creator who, according to the rationalists, is less enlightened than a "mole" (*taupe*), of Christ "whipped" (*fouetté*) by Pilate, and the vengeful "surfeit" (*saoulé*) of blood. All of these expressions are candid and robust, and at the same time pithily vigorous.⁴² In the account of the Passion for Good Friday, realistic expressions are multiplied to describe the insults of the mob. Some give Christ "mighty slaps, others punch Him in the nose." The Jewish people are "bewitched" (*ensourcelé*). At the scourging: "I see His shoulders which have turned red begin to swell, and from being whiter than the blinding snow, turn to black and blue. The flesh is slit and opens into long furrows; the blood flows; it spurts from every part, even into the eyes of the executioners." And carrying His cross, Jesus "falls flat upon His face at almost every step." In His hands and His feet, "members which are made up of a large number of bones, nerves, veins, arteries, and which are therefore infinitely more sensitive than all the others," they drive "big nails all rough and blunt."⁴³ Elsewhere

⁴² Louis de Mondadon, *Les sermons du Père de la Colombière*, *Messenger du Cœur de Jésus*, June, 1929.

⁴³ *Deuxième sermon pour le jour de la Passion*, I, 306-26.

going over the points which will make the matter of the General Judgment, after an enumeration of excesses, perjuries, and wrongs of every kind, the preacher adds: "Dress materials, head-dresses, patches, ribbons, complexions, food, furnishings, lodgings, all that will be examined." ⁴⁴ On another occasion to bring out the meanness of our prayers, he scoffs at a stupid person who prefers "garlic or nuts" to "bisques" and "ragouts" expensively prepared by a prince. ⁴⁵

La Colombière pauses one day to picture the death agony in this "rotting midden" which "the body of a person so beautiful and so healthy" has become. "He shows it completely changing color, bluish black in certain spots, yellow in others, and then black all over. . . . Over the face, the arms, the breast, and the whole body there appears a scum, a kind of mould, an unsightly bloom which precedes putrefaction." From "flesh which begins to open comes a vile pus, infectious and slimy," in which "are engendered a prodigious number of little worms." But all this abundance of macabre details which follow each other stubbornly, implacably, is not, as it would be for a Théophile Gautier, or a Baudelaire, a literary composition. He aims at placing in full sight "the end of all beauty, the end of all pleasures, of all life's delights. His purpose is to inspire disgust with this body, for whose sake right there at the court "there were so many doctors, so many caterers, so many cooks, so many perfumers" multiplying their attentions. "O how I would prefer to have my flesh consumed bit by bit, by fasts, watchings and other exercises of mortification!" ⁴⁶

No other instance of so stark a realism is to be found in the oratorical works of Father La Colombière. Perhaps this is just a touch of youthfulness. On the other hand what is frequent are unforeseen features of a realism, spiritual in a way, which surprises the hearer, takes his breath away and makes him think:

Where is this great lady who for a number of years had been one of the fairest ornaments of the court? . . . If I enter the room where she has passed and ended her days, a deep and dismal silence tells me that she is there no more. I find the superb bed on which she took her rest, the

⁴⁴ *Du jugement universel*, III, 374.

⁴⁵ *De la Prière*, IV, 223.

⁴⁶ *De la Mort*, III, 263 ff.

rich canopy under which she was wont, so to say, to receive the adoration of men. I behold her study through the wide open door, the space between bed and wall deserted, empty the armchair, the sedan, the carriage, the coifs, the skirts, the last dress that she has worn. But nowhere do I see the person to whom all these things belonged. . . .⁴⁷

Elsewhere Claude asks himself what a man who has stifled his conscience can expect from death. It is vain that he "surrounds himself with religious, with priests, with Christian and zealous relatives." "They will show him a crucifix; he will ask if it is of silver, if it has cost much. The confessor will speak to him of hell, and he will answer with a burst of ridicule."⁴⁸

To humble vain pretensions, here is an unexpected reflection, but so true, on the shams that are enacted in the world:

Do you think that any one pays any attention to what you do to call attention to yourself? Each one thinks only about himself and is troubled only about himself. One who you think is regarding you, is playing his own little game, and thinks you are regarding him. No one pays any attention to what others are doing, although each one in particular is sure that he is drawing all eyes to himself, and that there isn't any one who does not give himself airs to hold the gaze of those supposed admirers. . . .⁴⁹

In the same sense, but briefer: "Too great a desire to please is often an obstacle to doing so. . . . One is less ridiculous because of the bad qualities he has than he is for the good ones he pretends to have."⁵⁰

We could almost think it a maxim from La Rochefoucauld. La Colombière again wrote in the same vein with regard to confessions without sorrow: "One tells one's sins in almost the same way that one pays a bill."⁵¹ To cowards who are afraid to confess even to a priest who does not know them: "You wouldn't hurt yourselves any more if you spoke to a statue."⁵² Against delaying one's conversion:

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, III, 268.

⁴⁸ *Réflexions chrétiennes, De la Conscience*, V, 202.

⁴⁹ *Réflexions chrétiennes, De la vaine gloire*, V, 260.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, *Des désirs*, V, 133.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, *De la Conscience*, V, 192.

⁵² *Ibid.*, *De la Confession*, V, 204.

"One is willing to give oneself to God at an age at which we would not want to hire a man to work for us." ⁵³ Against those who give scandal: "The wicked rich man in hell begs that news of his misfortune be given to his brethren. He tries to save them. And we work to destroy them." ⁵⁴ To fathers and mothers who oppose the religious vocations of their sons: "I am surprised that parents who have had experience of the vanity and dangers of the world, prevent their children from leaving it." ⁵⁵ Sometimes it is a development which is gathered into a dart, quick and sharp, from which the hearer receives a salutary wound. We have already pointed out some examples; they are everywhere.

How can we forget these two sentences on submission to divine providence? "If we saw all that God sees, we would infallibly wish all that He wishes." "All that God does in our regard, He does not do only from reason; He also acts from love." ⁵⁶ Or this, on forgiving wrongs: "From the moment that you have an enemy you are the arbiter of your fate, and the absolute master of God's heart." ⁵⁷ Or again, this statement on the early years of the Church, so simple in its enunciation, but the effects of which for our social life reach to eternity: "There were no poor among the early Christians, because there were no rich." ⁵⁸

Another mark of a very sound realism was the dialogue with the congregation. The preacher urges them, questions them, answers, even retorts sometimes. It was a dramatic part, rather rare, except for Bossuet, among the great orators of the time. We might think it the prolonging of a conversation which had begun in the parlor. The following dialogue is on the subject of slander:

'I don't do it,' you say, 'out of hate or jealousy.'—What difference does it make what motive causes you to slander me if your detraction deprives me of my reputation and honor? 'I spoke only to one person.'

⁵³ *Ibid.*, *De la Pénitence différée*, V, 213.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, *De Scandale*, V, 249.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, *De l'état religieux*, V, 419.

⁵⁶ *De la soumission à la volonté de Dieu*, IV, 183 ff.

⁵⁷ *Pour le jour de saint Étienne*, II, 359.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, II, 523.

The loss isn't any the less for me. What right had you to discredit me with him? 'But he was a prudent and discreet man.' That is all the worse. I would rather lose the esteem of a hundred other men than the esteem of a man of character. 'But I didn't tell him that the thing was positively certain.' One will not fail to hold it for certain. 'But what if I didn't name any one?' If you haven't named any one, he will make a hundred rash judgments, he will suspect a number of persons who are quite innocent. You have said in general that it was a priest, a religious, and for that, men will think less of all priests and all religious. 'The offense I am telling you about was quite public.' That may be, but as yet the scandal had not got as far as me. Why must it be you who communicate this pest to me; it has already done only too much damage. 'You already knew it, you said.' Even so, why do you make me recall it? If it is meritorious to remind men of the mysteries of Jesus Christ, and other things which edify them, do you think that there is no sin in bringing back before their eyes that which has already scandalized them?⁵⁹

A humanist, therefore, and even if you wish, a "devout humanist," but he was without mawkishness. Long familiar with the science of style from his teaching of rhetoric, La Colombière finds without appearing to seek it, the clear, exact expression and the cadences of the orator. His feeling for literature was refined, he was sensitive to shades of meaning, and he escaped nevertheless the infection of mere literature by his constant endeavor to reach souls. If the saint did not absorb the literary man, at least he purified him.

Teacher, painter of manners, writer, are not enough to produce an orator. He must have the gift of moving wills. In the *Dialogues sur l'Eloquence*, Fénelon, with Bourdaloue in mind, writes a little too severely: "He is quite capable of convincing, but I have not known a preacher who persuades and touches less." This is a reproach which could not be aimed at La Colombière.

We cannot, of course, fully judge of an orator unless we see and hear him. In the absence of strength of voice, and perhaps even of action, there is a quality which all his contemporaries recognized in

⁵⁹ *De la Médisance*, IV, 451. Other examples of these lively dialogues: *Sur la Soumission à la volonté de Dieu*, IV, 186; *Sur la Restitution*, V, 378; *Sur la Confiance en la miséricorde divine*, IV, 306; V, 408.

Father La Colombière. Laurent Dugas thus characterized him: "Much unction, and a suggestive sweetness."⁶⁰ Father de Gallifet also praised in his master "this heavenly unction which belongs only to men who are full of the spirit of God."⁶¹ "A mysterious aroma, an overflow from the spirit (*oleum effusum*) in strength and sweetness, the sweet odor of Christ which is offered to souls, a divine grace impregnating and penetrating the words, and with them strengthening and making supple" the unction which in Claude accompanied his natural gifts and turned them to account.⁶²

It was not for nothing that Claude wrote in his spiritual notes at London: "Every day I feel more devotion for St. Francis de Sales."⁶³ Like the Bishop of Geneva, he wanted to be the messenger of salvation, the herald of the "good news." He does not minimize, of course, the severity of divine justice, but he preaches especially the tenderness of His mercy. He did not forget to awaken the fear that is the beginning of wisdom; but he stimulated hope even more.

The truth is that here and there, especially in sermons against the shameless profligacy of the carnival, we find accents of excessive severity: the difficulty of being saved, the small number of those saved. . . . This carrying things to an arithmetical extreme bears the mark of the times in which La Colombière lived. The severity of the Augustinian thought on the number of the elect had too deeply imbued the theology classrooms and the pulpits of the seventeenth century—let us recall only the famous Father Le Jeune—for a preacher to free himself of it all of a sudden.

That which is personal to La Colombière, and which grew upon him following the sorrowful complaints of Christ at Paray-le-Monial, is an unutterable and helpless amazement before the contrast presented by these two abysses, the unlimited love shown by God for men and the boundless ingratitude with which man insists on repaying so great a love.

⁶⁰ Letter to his cousin Bottu de Saint-Fonds, November 5, 1736. Ms. de Mongré.

⁶¹ *L'Excellence de la dévotion au Cœur adorable de Jésus-Christ*, 1^{re} partie, c. i.

⁶² Louis de Mondadon, *loc. cit.*

⁶³ VI, 123. Also to Mother de Saumaise, VI, 357.

What now, my brethren, will a God annihilate Himself, will a God pour out His blood and die upon a cross? Will He institute so many sacraments, perform so many miracles to establish a religion, and all this religion, the fruit of so many toils, of so many wonders, be reduced to the receiving of a few drops of water at your birth, after which you may, if you so wish, spend your life dreaming over cards, or flirting in the streets! You ask me who will be saved, if to be saved one must give up all the world's enjoyments and embrace the labor and the practice of good works? And I ask you, if that is not necessary, who is there who won't be saved? On what grounds does the Gospel so strongly stress the small number of the elect, if one can go laughing and dancing into heaven? ⁶⁴

After that no one will be able to accuse the preacher, at least of laxism. To bring to nought the accusations of Port Royal against the easy morals of the Jesuits, it has been said that it would be enough to quote Bourdaloue. To this name many others must be added, and among them that of La Colombière.

The real thought of the preacher on this truly crucial problem is to be found in his sermon on *Predestination*, which should be examined. This is how he states it at the end of his exordium: "However we explain predestination, it is certain that it destroys neither in God the will to save men, and this I will explain in the first point; nor in men, the liberty of themselves working out their own salvation, and this will be the second point." ⁶⁵ And for that reason, as he adds, the problem cannot cause any uneasiness.

If he recalls these extremely painful mysteries, it is only to stimulate his hearers, not to dishearten them. "I say that notwithstanding these great fear-inspiring subjects, it is an article of faith that every Christian can become good, and that all good Christians will be saved." Divining that in spite of all some would seek in the fact of predestination an excuse for their carelessness, a pretext for doing as they pleased, he follows this false reasoning step by step: "'God may refuse me the grace of final perseverance.' Yes, if you do not ask for it. 'But He can refuse!' Yes; who doubts it? He can

⁶⁴ *Premier sermon pour les derniers jours du carnaval*, III, 130.

⁶⁵ III, 428.

annihilate you also. A good father can disinherit a son who has never failed in respect towards him; but it is quite certain that he will never do so.”⁶⁶

It is thus that La Colombière always uplifts, exhorts, encourages. “His God,” some one has said, “is not so much the Most High, armed with the thunderbolt, as the Father who never wearies in forgiving. His Christ does not open His arms narrowly upon the world. His Christ is the Christ of the prodigal son, of the lost sheep, the Christ of Magdalen and the Samaritan woman, the Christ who, determined to save them almost in spite of themselves, runs after sinners.”⁶⁷ In the touching conflict in which the disobedient grows obstinate, the last word is love’s.

Yes, at the same time that you tell Him: ‘My God, I have had nothing to do with Your warning and Your inspirations. It is vain for You to wish to save me in spite of myself. I renounce Your paradise and my salvation.’ ‘And I,’ He said at the same moment, ‘I cannot consent to your misfortune. I will become so constant with you that you will yield at least to my importunity. I must make you happy whether you like it or not.’ ‘I am determined to go on living in my sin to the end.’ ‘And I, rather than leave you die in it, am resolved to pursue you to the end.’ ‘Why have You given me liberty, if You do not wish to leave me the free use of it?’ ‘But why should I have given My life and My blood for you, if you were bound to perish forever?’ ‘He loved us before we existed and even when we resisted.’⁶⁸

When speaking of the theological studies of Father La Colombière at Paris, we noted the current of optimism and of confidence, which for almost a century was coming to prevail among the theologians of the Society of Jesus. In the very depths of his being and by a reasoned conviction, Claude adhered to this opinion, not because of an instinctive impulse, but as the result of the inner struggles and experiences during his tertianship, doubly confirmed later by the observations made during his ministry, and by the revelations of

⁶⁶ *Réflexions Chrétiennes. Des Élus*, V, 408.

⁶⁷ Louis de Mondadon, *loc. cit.*

⁶⁸ *De l’Amour de Dieu*, IV, 306. “*Dilexit autem non existentes, sed et resistentes.*” Words of St. Bernard.

Paray-le-Monial. Already, during his long retreat, he had written: "I think that I do wrong to God's mercy in having even the least fear of hell, seeing that I have deserved it more than all the demons."⁶⁹ He repeats it, and this time in the name of all the good Christians in his audience, in the peroration of his sermon on *Confidence in God*.

Others may look forward to their happiness either in their riches or their talents; others may rely on the innocence of their lives, or on the severity of their penances, or on the number of their alms, or the fervor of their prayers: 'For thou, O Lord, singularly hast settled me in hope' [Ps. 4:11]. For me, O Lord, all my confidence is my confidence itself. This confidence never deceived any one. 'No one, no one ever hoped in the Lord and was confounded.'

I am, therefore assured that I will be everlastingly happy, because I firmly hope to be, and it is from You, O Lord, that I hope for it: 'In thee, O Lord, have I hoped, I shall never be confounded.' I know, alas, I know only too well that I am frail and inconstant. I know what temptation can do against the strongest virtues. I have seen the stars of heaven and the columns of the firmament fall. But all that cannot frighten me, as long as I hope. I stand protected from all misfortune, and I am sure of hoping always, because I still have hope in this unchanging hope.

Finally, I am sure that I cannot hope too much in You, and I cannot have less than what I would have hoped from You. Thus, I hope that in the most rapid slopes You will hold me, that You will sustain me against the most furious assaults, that you will cause my weakness to triumph over my most redoubtable enemies. I hope that you will love me always, and that I will love You also without respite, and, to carry all at once my hope as far as it can go, I hope for You Yourself, from You Yourself, O my Creator, in time and in eternity.⁷⁰

Another aspect of this confidence was his serenity of soul in the midst of the difficulties and dangers of life. Not as some would like to persuade themselves, as a consequence of the inner assurance we have that we can obtain from God everything that our fancy desires. Such confidence, far from being virtue, would be presumption. It is based on our own judgment, which often thinks necessary or

⁶⁹ VI, 7.

⁷⁰ IV, 215.

better, what God judges to be fatal. But a serenity of soul that has its source in the conviction that it is possible for us to obtain all the graces, even temporal, that God sees to be profitable for our greater good. This virtue, which leaves everything to God, our Father, which relies on God, is the only true confidence in God. It is this and this alone that Christ preached, when He said: "Are you not worth more than the birds of the air, or the lilies of the field?" It is the only virtue which Father La Colombière himself teaches in this same sermon on *Confidence*:

For myself, dear God, I am so persuaded that You watch over those who hope in You, and that we cannot lack anything when we expect everything from You, that I am determined to live without any care for the future, and to unload all my uneasiness on You. In peace in the self-same I will sleep, and I will rest: for Thou, O Lord, singularly hast settled me in hope [Ps. 4:9, 10].

No more care or uneasiness. . . . We cannot but remark that the Catholics to whom the father suggested this prayer were living, as their families had lived for a hundred years, under the daily threat of spoliation, exile, or even death. Of his hearers some doubtless counted martyrs among their ancestors. Could he himself have had many illusions on the stability of his own lot?

This current of confidence, developed by his contact with the heart of Jesus, made itself deeply felt in La Colombière's preaching and direction. But this confidence, far from impelling him to "that unfortunate and inhuman complaisance," which "leads one to slip cushions under the elbows of sinners,"⁷¹ served him only to stimulate his generosity. Even to the ordinary Christians of St. James, these courtiers and men of the upper classes, the religious is not satisfied with preaching the observance of the commandments. He knows that "God is looking for men who will sacrifice their desires, their inclinations, their repugnances; who will choose as a victim the idol of their heart."⁷² Claude made every effort to awaken these adorers desired by God. He has severe blame for the "confessors and di-

⁷¹ Bossuet, *Oraison funèbre de Nicholas Cornet*.

⁷² *Pour le jour de l'Épiphanie*, I, 226.

rectors who, instead of aiding grace and seconding God's designs, would deem as presumption and folly the fervor of souls whom God is calling to holiness, and oblige them to crawl along the earth, subjecting them to the laws of the world, and forcing them to be satisfied with an average life." ⁷³ This Jesuit has other aims. In his first sermon, this cry escapes him: "Indeed, I would be happy if with all the sermons I preach this year, I would be able to make only a single saint!" ⁷⁴

With this in mind, he is not afraid to propose practices of a very lofty perfection, knowing from experience that among those who listen, a few will understand. 66

Recalling the complaints of Christ to Margaret Mary he is glad to arouse the spirit of reparation, especially during times when God's love is most outraged. In his four sermons for the last days of the carnival, he insists on this point.

What an excellent occasion you have of signalizing yourselves in the eyes of this good Master, and of meriting all His tenderness! What satisfaction would not be yours, if you had the courage to spend this carnival in paying court to Him! With what complaisance would He not behold one who spent some time before a crucifix, or in the reading of a holy book, during these wretched nights, which so many others employ only to offend Him! What a spectacle it would be for the eyes of God, if tomorrow all those who are now listening to me would divide their day between reading, meditation, prayer, visiting the prisons and hospitals, comforting the poor and afflicted! . . . Your purpose being that by this increase of piety and fervor, you would have the glory and the consolation of making up for what others lack; that Jesus would find in you what He loses through the remissness of so many bad Christians; that, in the almost universal revolt of all His subjects, you alone will take the place of an entire kingdom.⁷⁵

At other times during this same season of excess, knowing that he has before him souls who spend the hours in a holy and salutary compunction which others squander in thoughtless laughter, the exhortation finds a place for joy:

⁷³ *Pour le jour de la Nativité*, II, 365.

⁷⁴ *Pour la fête de tous les saints*, I, 29.

⁷⁵ *Quatrième sermon pour les derniers jours du carnaval*, III, 248.

How fortunate you are, you who choose just these unhappy days to recollect yourselves in solitude, you who make it an exquisite and delicate pleasure to deprive yourselves of all kinds of pleasures! You who try to console your good Master for the treachery of His other servants, who ask pardon of Him for the outrages which He has not received from you, you who in His presence take upon yourselves all the guilt of your brethren, you who punish yourselves for their disorders and do penance for their callousness. . . . [Dear God!] Make good use of your time to pay court to Jesus Christ! . . . I cannot tell you how this thought sustains me in an occupation, which in other respects is not without its disappointments and its perils.⁷⁶

If this thought sustained him, was it not because he saw in these atoning souls a prelude to the fulfillment of the entreaties of Christ at Paray-le-Monial? This throws some light on what is said in the obituary notice of Sister Dorothee de Chalonney, a Visitandine of Paray-le-Monial: "To draw her out of her spiritual torpor, she was given during her novitiate the sermons of Father La Colombiere on the four ends of man. By these helps God, so to say, lifted her out of herself."⁷⁷

God's grace and man's ingratitude. . . . The frequent meditation of these two abysses maintained in the sensitive soul of La Colombiere a quiver of apprehensive compassion for sinners—individuals or nations—who are the victims of their own unconcern. If he does not ask freedom from suffering for them, it is because he wishes that the trial nobly accepted will merit abundant light for them and bring them back to the full light of truth. This is his thought for England especially, separated as she is from Rome. After fourteen months of apostolate, on a certain Sunday of Advent in 1677, this compassionate love breaks forth into accents of undeniable grandeur. The preacher had just shown from the example of the Jews that hardening of the heart is often the result of long-standing ingratitude. Then, suddenly, "Poor England," he cried, "wilt thou not perhaps be a sad example of this terrible truth. For on what kingdom

⁷⁶ *Premier et troisième sermons pour les derniers jours du carnaval*, III, 146, 216.

⁷⁷ *Vie et vertu de la Soeur Dorothee de Chalonney*, died at Paray, July 2, 1710.

did heaven in other days pour out greater blessings! What people has ever given proofs of a greater zeal for the faith and a greater submission to the Church?" How many of thy kings "have renounced their crowns for the love of Christ," how many princes and princesses "who have given an example of evangelical poverty and chastity!"

The number of thy religious has almost equalled the number of thy other inhabitants; thou wert hardly less than a great monastery, so many of thy subjects were eager, some to give their goods for the founding of religious houses, others to leave all and shut themselves up in them. I will not speak of the honor which the Queen of Angels received from the ancient English. I will not recall to your minds that they were so devoted to this good Mother, that thou wert for that reason called Mary's dowry. We know that thou wert the first to raise the standard for the defense of the Immaculate Conception; that it was to thee that the Blessed Virgin presented the miraculous scapular which all Christendom reveres, and which serves as an impenetrable breastplate to all those who have the happiness to wear it. It suffices to say that thy faith could not be contained within the limits which the ocean seems to lay down for it, for it has spread far beyond the seas. There are whole kingdoms which recognize thee as their Mother in Jesus Christ, whom thy children have won for the Catholic Church.

Then, comparing those times of unity with "this multitude of sects, which causes each one to doubt of his own, to distrust it, to be at a loss as to what he should hold, which is the cause of the greater number having little religion, and many to have none at all," the speaker cries: "Dear God, when will You cause so great a scourge to cease? How can we at length appease You, and oblige You to unite us all in one and the same fold, as we had been throughout the space of thirteen or fourteen centuries?" ⁷⁸

To hasten this return, and, in a general way, to convert the mass of the people, La Colombière counted less on preaching than on the example and influence of the faithful in their own circles. Already Catholic Action, in the narrower meaning it has been given in our day, seemed to him to be the most efficacious means of apostolate.

⁷⁸ *Pour le troisième dimanche de l'Avent, 1677, III, 111.*

Preaching, in fact, is only for the few. It is almost alone for those who are already good enough, and who could be passed over. Sinners do not come to hear us; they do not think highly enough of the word of God. Moreover, when curiosity or some other motive does bring them, they arm themselves, so to say, against our zeal, they are on their guard against all that may be told them for their good. But you, when you leave this chapel to mingle with what is called the world, who go to scatter throughout this great city; you who go to deal with those who live in the forgetfulness of God, and who are walking on the edge of the precipices; you, whom one does not mistrust; you who are loved, you whose mind and judgment are held in honor, what good would you not do among your brethren, if you wished to make use of these advantages!

It is true that his zeal in this might have been excessive. La Colombière who was living in Paris in the days of *Tartuffe*, knew of the bitter-sweet discussions about true and false devotion, which since then have ever agitated Catholic circles. But he did not want to be misunderstood about the activity he desired. Nothing could have had less resemblance to a "cabal."

I am not thinking of engaging you as preachers in your parties, much less of appointing you as public censors and letting you loose on all occasions against the disorders of the age. These professional zealots who wish to reform everything the first day, who make so much noise, who observe no moderation; these devotees who cry out against the least irregularity, who are scandalized at everything, who wish at any cost to get everybody on the same level; these devotees, I say, are well meaning. I have no doubt of that. But this is certainly not the character of Christian zeal, and great harm is done to genuine devotion, which is so reasonable and wise, if it is blamed for the unrestrained enthusiasm and imprudence of these people. True zeal is neither turbulent nor impetuous. It is moderate, discreet, it knows how to choose the time to work itself in gently. It is tender and sympathetic, it is patient, it is humble. It is not by means of great discourses that it will produce its best effects. It is often by kindnesses, by services opportunely offered; it is by the prudent use of the authority it has over others, of the confidence others have in us, of the friendship they bear us, of the gratitude they owe us. It is especially by good example, and by the prayers we say that we will bring down heaven's blessing on all of these means.

There, my brethren, is the zeal which I recommend to you today. By it this woman will sanctify her husband, her children, all her household. By this means this man will convert his neighbor; this young woman will gather an unbelievable harvest among her friends. It is by this means that the great, like all the others, will when they have a mind to, perform the prodigies and make the progress which we would look for in vain from the most fervent of missionaries.⁷⁹

Would not these pages with their accent of modernity make a very pointed preface for a manual of Catholic Action?

But if the hearers are to be willing to lend their help in the apostolate of the priest, they have need themselves of being thoroughly convinced. On what power did La Colombière count to be able to win them over? Not on his eloquence, as he often said, but on the voice of God Himself, that voice which speaks to the inner man

in a manner which the most eloquent and the holiest of men, which the angels themselves could not imitate. . . . That voice which solicits you, which reproaches your remissness, which frightens you when it threatens, which inspires you with a fresh ardor for good . . . beware of thinking that it is the voice of the preacher. . . . If it were, it would be heard equally by every one; it would have the same effects in all hearts. It is your Master who is present and who does you the honor of calling you to Him.⁸⁰

This constant concern to make souls attentive to the inner movements of the Holy Spirit we will come upon again when we have to speak of Claude's spiritual direction. It is already characteristic of his preaching. But is it not the concern of all the saints?

If, to come to an end, we are asked what place we should assign to Father La Colombière among the preachers of the seventeenth century, we would answer that we have neither the desire nor the competence to set up a prize list. When we have established that he has not the strength of Bourdaloue, nor the magnificent amplitude of Bossuet, where shall we look for others who can be preferred to him? Less finished perhaps and less thorough than Mascaron,

⁷⁹ *Pour le jour de la Circoncision*, I, 174 ff.

⁸⁰ *De la Prédication*, IV. 404. Also in the *Sermon pour le jour de l'Épiphanie*, I, 211.

Fléchier or Massillon, he is for us more pleasant to read. He is more modern, he has certainly aged less.

His contemporaries had already done him justice. Eleven months after his death, a collection of his sermons in four volumes was ready for printing. Editions multiplied and were sold with such rapidity that in the half-century from 1685 to 1739, Anisson in Lyons, and Muguet in Paris—a bookseller's detail which is worth noting—built up the neat little fortune of 100,000 crowns.

If Claude does not appear on the official list of preachers who have shed honor on the French pulpit, it is merely because he did not preach at Paris, and did not preach for any length of time. But when we think of the combination not merely of natural qualities, but of the divine virtues required for this ministry of the word, "which ought to be exercised by angels rather than mortal men,"⁸¹ we are tempted to apply to La Colombière the word which Father de Ravignan said of Bourdaloue: "He is the king of preachers."⁸²

23

Eucharist and Sacred Heart

LA COLOMBIÈRE would not be a son of St. Ignatius if he did not have an attentive and loving devotion for the Word Incarnate, for the Christ, beautiful and attractive of the Spiritual Exercises, for His virtues and human qualities. With the exception of Bossuet, no preacher of the seventeenth century has produced finer or profounder pages on "this man who is called Jesus."¹ On the day of

⁸¹ *De la Prédication*, IV, 385.

⁸² Whatever Father Charrier may say about it (*Préface* to the *Oeuvres*, p. xxxvii), it is not La Colombière that de Ravignan is talking about, but Bourdaloue. Cf., his *Life*, by Father Ponlevoy, I, 362: "For our French preachers, it is Bourdaloue, again Bourdaloue who is king."

¹ *Premier sermon pour le jour d l'Ascension*, I, 387-88.

the Ascension especially, when he heard the angels, "taken by surprise at the magnificence of the reception given him in heaven," cry out: "Who is this King of Glory?" he joyfully seized the occasion to explain to them. "The angels seem to be inviting us to tell them what we know of the Savior of the world and how He has lived among us. It is to satisfy them that I undertake today the most beautiful of panegyrics, but the most difficult that one can possibly imagine." For Claude, it is only an excuse. His secret escapes him at once: "Let us speak the truth, my brethren, it is for my own satisfaction that I take this occasion of dealing with a subject on which I have wished to speak to you for a long time."² He begins at once "to extol the virtues" which have won this triumph for his well-beloved Lord, and to make us enter into the interior of Jesus.

There is no abbreviating such pages. We can only send the reader to them. We lay stress rather on La Colombière's efforts to promote the veneration of the Eucharist and the devotion to the Sacred Heart. Considering the mission that was entrusted to him at Paray-le-Monial, they merit special attention.

Finishing a retreat in London in January 1677, Claude wrote:

I have laid it as a law upon myself to secure by every possible means the fulfillment of what was prescribed for me on the part of my adorable Master with regard to His precious body in the Blessed Sacrament of the altar. . . . Touched with compassion for the blind who are unwilling to submit to a belief in this great and ineffable mystery, I would willingly give my blood to persuade them of this truth which I believe and which I profess. In this country where they make it a point of honor to doubt Your real presence in this august Sacrament, I feel much consolation in making acts of faith many times a day in the reality of Your adorable body under the appearances of bread and wine.³

Not only did they "make it a point of honor to doubt," but for some, it was an obligation to deny. After 1673 the *Test Act* imposed an obligation on all those who aspired to public office to declare themselves against transubstantiation. For the Anglicans the consecrated host was only a bit of bread, and the papists who adored it

² *Ibid.*, I, 384. See especially pages 396-408.

³ *Oeuvres*, VI, 115 ff.

were idolaters. For a long time, the kings of England, in the oath they took on the day of their coronation, themselves prolonged the echo of this calumnious imputation.⁴

Even among Catholics who remained faithful to their belief, there were souls whom strong infiltrations of Jansenism withdrew from the Eucharist. After 1643, editions of Arnauld's work on Frequent Communion were multiplied. In 1674 an odious popularization appeared, *De l'usage des sacraments de pénitence et d'Eucharistie*, the author of which, François Pâris, limited himself to choosing the most violent pages of Arnauld's book. These books and the ideas which they conveyed made their way over seas. La Colombière beheld the ravages they caused: "You deceive yourselves, whoever you are, who preach to us only of the respect and reverence due to this daily bread. It is not for me to judge your intentions, but your language certainly does not agree with the language of Jesus Christ."⁵ Claude's purpose was to quiet the panic in men's consciences. At the same time Bourdaloue was doing likewise in Paris. If neither

⁴ To do away with this vestige of a painful past in the coronation ceremony, there was need at the beginning of the 20th century, of the daring initiative of another Jesuit.

In 1906, Father Bernard Vaughan, in the course of a sermon to the Catholic elite in London, after having proved the real presence of Christ in the Blessed Sacrament, ended with a sharp invective against the passage in the royal oath in which the worship of the Blessed Sacrament is treated as idolatry. Edward VII having taken this oath a few years previously, there was a fine uproar in the Protestant press. A few days later, one of the Horse Guards asked Father Vaughan to Buckingham Palace. Instead of the affable reception to which he was accustomed, the Jesuit experienced only coldness. Edward VII let him advance to his drawing-room, without a look, without a word. There the newspapers were spread out before him, with their account of the famous sermon. "Is it true, Father Vaughan, what they say about you here?" "Yes, sire, it is true." "And these arguments on which you base the real presence are the true expression of your thought?" "Undoubtedly, sire." "Why, then, you Catholics are not idolaters?" "Assuredly not, sire! We do not adore a piece of bread. We adore Jesus Christ present in place of the bread, of which nothing remains but the appearances." There was silence for a moment. Then the king spoke again: "Well, then, Father Vaughan, you have done a good deed. This oath will be the regret of my life, I feel bound to tell you. And I must add that the Catholics are among my most faithful subjects." We have this account from the mouth of Father Vaughan himself.

⁵ *Sermon pour le jour du Corps de Dieu*, II, 8.

of them went to the logical conclusion of their principles, which would have been to urge upright souls to the daily reception of this "daily bread," it is because the issue had not yet become ripe. Theologians, founders, and superiors of religious orders, and the pope adopted at the time a line of conduct which was relatively reserved. Even in the best of circumstances two communions a week barely met with approval. It was not for Bourdaloue or La Colombière to improve upon that.

But God wished that at least at the center of London one voice should be raised to protest against the error, to assert the reality of the Eucharistic Presence and recall the invitations of Jesus. Two years more and the people of England were going to be called upon to abjure their beliefs under pain of confiscation of goods, exile, and even death. To prepare a generation of martyrs, the faith had to be strengthened, hearts more abundantly nourished on the body of Christ.

At the end of the Lent of 1677, a profanation, such as sometimes occurs even in Catholic lands, must have had a very painful effect on La Colombière. The French Ambassador Courtin gave an account of it to Pomponne. On the night of Holy Saturday, thieves came boldly into the chapel of the French embassy and stole the tabernacle, "which was of gilded copper, with columns of ebony, and a large number of agates, easily worth a thousand crowns." "The next morning, a large number of fragments were reported found in a field. I sent one of my priests to the place, who found many consecrated hosts which the thieves had thrown into a ditch after they took the ciborium from the tabernacle."⁶

Three sermons of La Colombière on the Eucharist have come down to us. One, which was more dogmatic, was for the feast of Corpus Christi, and explains the singular love which Jesus shows for us in this sacrament. Two others, for the season of Lent, are more immediately practical in their aim, the first dealing with the necessary conditions for a good Easter communion, and the second on the propriety and advantages of frequent communion.

Is not the love of Christ evident, we read in the first, when we

⁶ Letter of April 26, 1677.

reflect that "there is neither time nor place which does not seem proper to Him for this interview" with the faithful soul, and that there is no contemptuous treatment or insult to which He does not expose Himself by coming among men in such a disguise?

How many profligates, how many heretics treat Him on our altars as a mock divinity, accusing those who adore Him under these contemptible appearances either of idolatry or weakness! Conceive, if possible, the hatred God has for sin: it is infinite, it is irreconcilable. It is less, however, than the desire He has to come to us, since He chooses to abandon Himself, so to say, to the sacrilegious embraces of the most infamous sinners rather than renounce the delight He takes in the company of those whom He loves.

Moreover, if Jesus presents us with His body under the species of bread, what does He wish us to understand?

My lovable Master, if you ask me only for worship, permit me to tell You that You do not make Your intentions clearly known to us. It is true that in our churches we raise thrones for You, and that in the light of a thousand candles we make brilliant about you all that is most precious in nature. But all that is the invention of man. It is their voice and not Yours that all this display makes me hear. It is men who have lifted You up on their altars. But You Yourself have wished to conceal Yourself under a bit of bread. This bread would be better placed on a table than on a throne and in the stomachs of Christians than merely exposed for their adoration.

Jesus has moreover revealed His intentions in words the most explicit. "He has threatened us with death if we refuse to take His flesh as food." His desire to be incarnate is nothing compared with this. "To open heaven and have the Redeemer come down," there was need throughout the ages of the "prayers of the patriarchs and prophets, of their sighs and tears." In the Eucharist, "it is He who prays men, begs them, does violence to them by obliging them to receive Him. Force them, He says in the Gospel, to take part in the feast I have prepared for them." And what eloquence there is in the fact that while the other sacraments "can be conferred but once, like baptism, confirmation and holy orders, or at least very rarely,

like matrimony and extreme unction, God leaves us entirely free with regard to the Sacrament of the Altar . . . We can receive Jesus Christ in the Eucharist every month, every week, every day."

After that how does it happen that we have so little alacrity for the body of Jesus Christ, "so much difficulty in uniting ourselves with You who are our one and only sovereign good?" We excuse ourselves, alleging the motive of respect. The profligates, to begin with—

They withdraw from the holy table out of fear of profaning it, because of the guilty habits they still have. By why don't they rid themselves of these evil habits, to avoid at one and the same time sacrilege and disobedience? . . . Cursed unchaste man, you prefer the body of a prostitute to the body of your good Master, and you dare to say that you have respect for this holy body!

For those who live without attachment to mortal sin, but who "cover themselves with the cloak of humility," to keep away from the Eucharist, let them know well, "that all the virtues are linked together, and that whoever would withdraw from the altar out of a genuine feeling of humility, would infallibly have all the virtues that could make us worthy of approaching every day."

But after all, if they abstain from this sacrament of love,

it is not because they think themselves unworthy of participating; it is that they fear that by participating they will do that which will make them worthy. . . . You feel that if you multiply your confessions and communions, you will have to moderate your play, set limits to your comfort, greatly retrench your dealings with the world: that the practice of frequenting the sacraments necessarily asks this reform, that it effects it insensibly, as though in spite of ourselves. You foresee the combat which you will have to sustain against God, the reproaches of conscience you will have to endure, if you attempt to join a tepid and a worldly life with communions so often repeated. All that frightens a lazy soul. It would rather deprive itself of the bread of angels than, receiving it, live a more Christian life.

Sacrament of love. . . . From beginning to end, the sermon is nothing but a commentary on the complaints which two years

earlier escaped from the "heart of Jesus, who loved men so much that He spared no pain to prove His love." And like the complaint of Christ, he too ends with a cry of pain because of "the ingratitude with which we repay so great a love." Then, recalling the revelations which he had been commissioned to make known, La Colombière concluded:

What then will You do, Lord, to overcome such hardness of heart? You will have to give us another heart, a tender heart, a sensitive heart, a heart which is neither of marble nor of bronze. You will have to give Your own heart. Come, lovable heart of Jesus, come and place Yourself in the midst of my breast, and there enkindle a love which responds, if that is possible, to the obligation I have to love God. Love Jesus as much in me as You have loved me in Him. Grant that I live only in Him, that I live only for Him, so that I may live forever with Him in heaven.

Such is the sermon for the feast of Corpus Christi.⁷ It holds a central position in Claude's preaching, just as the Eucharist does in his life. We could group everything around it, his lectures, his devotions, his activities, like another "Dispute of the Blessed Sacrament."

And yet, it is not by routine and tepid communions that we must respond to the pressing invitations of Jesus. La Colombière devoted a whole sermon to recalling this. Since "the Eucharist is a sacrament of faith and love, it is easy to conclude that faith and love are the two necessary dispositions which we should bring with us when we receive it." With as much care as the severest of rigorists, the Jesuit reminds his hearers of this truth. "It is not enough not to be covered with mud, I want to see you with the whiteness of a stunning beauty."

Is it not true, my brethren, that if Jesus Christ were to come visibly to your home to take a meal with you, or simply to honor you with a visit, is it not true that you would be in desperation if you had been notified only a moment before? Would you be quite at ease, if He were to find with you that person who has been for you the occasion of so many falls; if He were to see that suggestive picture, that scandalous statue; if he were

⁷ *Oeuvres*, II, 1-24.

to find all the tools of your vanity displayed on your wash-stand, the books in which you have so often drunk the poison of impurity still wide open on your table? Would it not be a deadly annoyance to have to receive Him in a dress that was far from modest, in rooms filled with luxuries, all adorned with the possessions of the poor, and where there was neither crucifix, nor holy picture, nor holy water, nor any other sign of Christian living? Is it not true that you would give anything to have a few days in which to remove all that might wound the eyes of your holy Guest, and to substitute objects which could give Him joy, and draw upon yourself praise from His lips?

How is it then, my dear Christians, that before receiving Him on these feasts, you take so little time and so little care to purify and adorn your heart, where you are to give Him lodging? How is it that you do not take at least a few days to drive entirely from your mind this person who still reigns there and who cannot be banished by the slight effort you make at Easter to conceive an act of contrition? . . .

Having harried his "dear Christians," the apostle has no trouble in wresting this admission from them: "It is because we lack faith." And so, "to prepare you to receive your Master, I will not encumber you with a large number of methods. I have but one word to say to you: Believe, and then take counsel only of yourself."

Was not the little fruit that so many reaped from the Eucharist a matter of amazement?

We receive our Lord every fortnight, every week, and we are always the same, always vain, always ill-tempered, always careless in the practice of good, always cold at prayer, always the slaves of our petty passions. . . . But what are we to think of the power of the Eucharist when we see a woman return from church every Sunday, where she has received communion, and coming from it, as peevish, as ready to lose her temper on the slightest provocation as if she had not received the God of peace and of sweetness? . . . What! this bread of angels, this bread of life, this compendium of the wonders of the Almighty, this fruit of so many pains, so many merits, in a word, the adorable body of Jesus Christ, so often touched, so often eaten, cannot stifle in your heart this petty feeling of vengeance, this vain desire of glory, this petty jealousy? There you are, thoughts as dissipated as ever, as inconsiderate in your talk, as attached to your belongings, to your petty comforts, your nonsense?

The preacher insists: Is it that "the body and blood of Christ are without strength, or that our puny obstacles can check the effect of an infinite power?" He insists to such an extent, that he can feel his hearers object: "If that is true, wouldn't it be better to stay away from the holy table?" The very question which the Duchess de Lesdiguières had proposed to the Duchess de Longueville at the time that Claude was living in Paris. And the latter was persuaded without more ado not to make her Easter duty. Perhaps La Colombière remembered that, but his answer was quite different. "Such advice might be given in other circumstances, but in the times in which we live there is no other line to be taken than that of being sincerely reconciled with God."⁸

In a third sermon, directing his remarks to souls "who had already conceived a true desire of living like Christians, La Colombière completes his teaching. He invites them "most urgently to multiply their communions without listening to false reasons," for, "not only can they be multiplied without failing in respect for our Savior's body, and without making this action fruitless," but "by often repeating it there is more glory for God and more profit for men." As to "the others who are attached to the world," he adds that he "does not blame them for receiving rarely; but at the same time I am not so credulous as to allow them to persuade me that it is from a feeling of humility that they abstain."

I am well aware that one can receive communion in such a way as to reap no fruit from it. But I maintain that it is not because they approach too frequently. I say that they who communicate every week, without however becoming better, would become worse if they received more rarely; that no disposition short of mortal sin can prevent the effects of the sacrament, which is to sanctify the soul, to give it strength and vigor to do good and resist evil; that, since each time that one communicates one receives an increase of merit and of habitual grace, one communion must necessarily dispose us for the next, and that, consequently, the oftener one goes the more one is in a disposition to profit from those which ought to be made.⁹

⁸ *Deuxième sermon sur la sainte Eucharistie*, II, 33 ff; 45 ff.

⁹ *Troisième sermon sur la sainte Eucharistie*, II, 57, 67, 71. Cf. *Réflexions chrétiennes, de la fréquente communion*, V, 217-225.

Following on the note of January, 1677, which we have placed at the beginning of this chapter, La Colombière inserted in full the revelation which St. Margaret Mary had received from the Sacred Heart. The account was preceded by the following lines:

I recognize that God wishes me to serve Him by seeing to the accomplishment of His desires concerning the devotion which He has suggested to a person with whom He communicates very confidentially, and for which He has wished to make use of my weakness. I have already suggested it to a good many people in England, and I have written to France to ask one of my friends to make it known in the place where he is living. It will be very fruitful there, and the large number of chosen souls in that community makes me think that the practice in that holy house will be very pleasing to God.

What was this community? One of those surely in which the father had himself lived while at Lyons. But none of his contemporaries has ever thought of letting us know.

What would we not give today to have that letter—the first—which suggested the devotion to the Sacred Heart! The simple fact that the friend in question either did not keep it, or did not think it worth while to give it to the first editor of the correspondence, indicates, if we did not know them from other sources, the prejudices which Claude had to overcome to satisfy the desires of his divine Master.

As happens in times when heresies develop, men of the Church, defenders of tradition, are on their guard against novelties. Twenty years later, when the provincial of Lyons, Gabriel Jacob, submitted to the Roman censors of the Society of Jesus, the work *De Cultu Sacrosancti Cordis Jesu*, probably written by Father de Gallifet, the revisors unanimously declared to the father general, Thyrso Gonzalez: "We recognize that this book is written with learning and talent, and could hardly be more suitable to develop the devotion and worship of the Sacred Heart. However, we all think it better that this book be not printed, and that Ours should not undertake to further this cause, much less that Your Paternity intervene to obtain a solemn feast for the whole Church, especially *at a time*

when so many new devotions are appearing every day, and are being pitilessly rejected by the Church."

In a country like England, where the most incongruous Protestant sects were beginning to swarm, Catholics could not help being still more distrustful of all religious novelty. To hold fast to ancient forms of piety naturally seemed to them a pledge of orthodoxy and security. How could they hope for communion every first Friday, the holy hour, or even the *amende honorable*, when so many essential practices were given up? As to soliciting the institution of a special feast for the glory of the heart of Jesus, asked for by a French nun, could they give thought to this before France had given the example? Could they do so, in a nation where there was no Catholic bishop to whom they could turn? The chapter of canons, even if it had not been suffering from inner dissension, had no authority to establish a local feast. And merely asking for the consideration of such a project would have run the risk of awakening fresh discord.

Hemmed in by so many obstacles, La Colombière's apostolic field seemed quite unpromising for the carrying out of his plans, and we can understand that he could have cried: "Why can I not be everywhere, dear God, and make known what You expect from Your servants and friends?"¹⁰ There remained the direction he could give in conversations, and with an infinite prudence the instruction in St. James' Chapel.

An incident recounted in the life of a Franciscan martyr, Father Wall, will give us some idea of the value of these conversations, their influence, and the reputation they made for their author.

It was at nightfall on the eve of All Saints, 1678, two weeks before La Colombière's arrest. Forbidden to remain, like other priests, this religious, perceiving the first rumblings of the persecution, took advantage of the darkness to make his way to the preacher of the palace of St. James. "Father," he said, "I am a poor Minor of St. Francis. I have come to you to seek strength and advice in the heart of Jesus; for we know everywhere in the land that you are its apostle. Among all the friends whom I wish to see in London, there is a member of your Society, Father Turner, who, I was told, is now a

¹⁰ *Retraite de Londres*, VI, 117.

prisoner at Newgate awaiting the crown of martyrdom. If an order of my superiors had not sent me suddenly away from here, I should have obtained the same favor with a prospect of the same reward." La Colombière congratulated his caller on coming to look for strength at its true source. Then he added: "No one can penetrate the mysteries of this heart without tasting the chalice of bitterness which Jesus drained so completely at Gethsemane. The friends of Christ, even when already in this life they receive as consolation the hundred-fold of that which they left behind, cannot, however, escape the painful sword of persecution. Oh, if I too could gather this precious grace which you English priests are about to reap* in this land of crosses!"

These two apostles prolonged their conversation on the love of Jesus far into the night—holy hours that were full of blessings. And it was only when Father Wall had celebrated Mass at the little altar of the Sacred Heart, set up by La Colombière in his oratory, that they separated at dawn on All Saints.

Later the Franciscan said, giving an account of his conversation: "I had heard speak of the famous Jesuit earlier. I expected to find a man deeply versed in the science of divine love. But when I was in his presence I thought that I was speaking with the Apostle St. John returned to earth to relight this love at the fire of the heart of Jesus. His calm and noble attitude seemed to me to be entirely that of the well-beloved disciple at the foot of the cross, when the spear pierced the side of his Master and revealed the tabernacle of His burning charity."

In the light of such testimony we can surmise the fervor which Claude could have aroused for his beloved devotion in his public instructions in the chapel of St. James. Nothing, alas, has come down to us that would enable us to judge, except a fragment of the lava, grown a little cold, in the text of his sermons, especially his *Meditations on the Passion of Our Savoir for the Fridays of Lent*.

In these meditations, as he was not much concerned about the different episodes of the Passion, Claude goes straight to the divine heart which is their center and source. He introduces his hearers to It to contemplate the virtues of which this heart is the model. How

can we understand the sufferings of Christ, how can we be touched by them, without penetrating to the infinite love which inspires them?

In the first meditation, which is devoted to the *Penance of Jesus*, he represents Him to us

in the Garden: *Tristis est anima mea*, trembling, dejected, sweating blood and water, groaning, weeping, prostrate on the ground. He is a man pierced and overwhelmed with sorrow. And the cause? The sins of men. There never was sorrow like this, because of the number of sins, because He knew their enormity, their ingratitude, their insolence, their injustice, and because He loved God and men infinitely.

Studying next the *Charity of Jesus in His sufferings*, "this charity," he says, "asks for our imitation."

Let us make our own the feelings of this tender and generous heart. Let us take the resolution of loving the poor, of retrenching something from our pleasures. If the rich did that, everybody would eat, no one would lack bread, upright men would not be cast into prison because they could not pay for the bed where they lie. Indeed, my brethren, there are miseries like these. Inform yourselves about them. Kings, learning that Jesus Christ was born in a stable, came seeking Him, exposing themselves to a thousand dangers, a thousand fatigues, to come and make Him presents. The same Jesus suffers in worse places than a stable.

Even though the racing stables on the banks of the Thames had not then attained to the comfort of those of today, Claude added: "Your horses, if you will permit me to say so, are incomparably better off than He."

The apostle becomes still more insistent when admiring the *Patience of Jesus in His sufferings*. "Let us enter into the heart of the Son of God and see what is His attitude towards His enemies." 1° He excuses them. "This heart full of kindness is more intent on what lessens sin than on what makes it culpable. . . . 2° He is touched with real sympathy. . . . 3° He is moved by love in their regard, and prays for them;" He saves them, "for His prayer is not fruitless." The whole third part of the meditation continues in this intimate sanctuary. Then, coming to a close: "To learn this lesson,

let the heart of Jesus be our school. Let us make It our dwelling during this Lent. Let us study Its movements and try to conform our hearts to them. Yes, divine Jesus, I wish to dwell there. There in silence I will train myself to resignation to Your divine will, to an invincible constancy. . . .”¹¹ He who speaks like this is familiar, we feel, with this loving retreat.

In the three meditations which follow on the *Abnegation of Jesus Suffering*, His *Contempt of the World*, His *Zeal*, there is the same ardor and the same insistence. And always, like an obsession, the complaint of Paray-le-Monial on the ingratitude of men: “*Quid potui facere vineae meae, et non feci?*” . . . I always find you disputing with Me about trifles . . . will you never then do anything for Me through love? How long will I be hearing you tell me: ‘It isn’t a mortal sin.’ ‘I am not obliged!’ Was Jesus obliged to die for you?”¹²

When the elite of his hearers were thus prepared to meditate the Passion interiorly throughout Lent, La Colombière, making use of the same method in the Good Friday services, invited the whole assembly, which was more crowded that day, to represent to themselves especially the secret pains endured by Jesus Christ.

Afflictions of heart are much more common than those of the body . . . There are conditions in which one has little to suffer outwardly. But neither wealth nor the throne itself is able to defend the soul from sadness or from other passions which trouble it and plunge it into bitterness. It is true that Jesus wished to bear all our sorrows. . . . His heart was much more weighed down than His Body.

The oppression caused by the crimes of the world! At Gethsemane “when I remember that He had before His eyes not only all the harsh treatment that was going to be inflicted on Him, but still more all the sins that had been committed against God up to that time, and all those which were to be committed to the end of the world, I am convinced that this mortal fear, this bloody sweat, this agony, give utterance to a small, a very small part of the afflictions of His Heart.”

¹¹ *Troisième Méditation*, V, 30 ff.

¹² *Deuxième Méditation*, V, 18.

"Hidden pains" so grievous that outward sufferings

were a relief, or at least a solace for the heart broken with sorrow. . . . O inconceivable sorrow! O unbelievable bitterness of the heart of Jesus which made Him insensible to such great pains, which found even in these pains a kind of soothing! . . . Yes, my brethren, in each torment which we have made the Son of God endure, there was always something for His heart a thousand times more cruel than that which seemed to afflict only the body.

It was suffering to have a to bear injustice and ingratitude, to see Himself sacrificed to the envy of His enemies and betrayed. Suffering from the calumnies and the scorn, and seeing Barabbas preferred to Himself. Suffering from the infidelity of all of His disciples and of His own apostles. . . . What would you say of a man who had only one friend left in his misfortune? . . . What a wound to the faithful and tender heart of Jesus Christ!" Suffering, greater still, because of the souls whom He fails to save:

Judge what His sorrow must have been in seeing the whole Jewish people perish, His dear people, the fairest portion of His inheritance, kingdoms, whole worlds of infidels, and, finally, half the number of Christians misled by heresy, and the other half, with few exceptions, corrupted by vice and dying in sin. . . . No, Lord, nothing can be compared with this sorrow. The affliction of Your heart is an ocean of affliction, the very sight of which frightens and overwhelms me with sadness.

And, concluding, in the name of his whole audience: "Dear God, it is to this inward passion, these hidden crosses that I wish to cling henceforth in meditation. It is to this afflicted heart that I wish to give all my tenderness. . . ." ¹⁸

What was the effect of La Colombière's preaching with regard to these two devotions, the Eucharist and the Sacred Heart? We are not able to give details, except for the Duchess of York. In the life of exile which she led in France, whether in her little court at Saint-Germain, or at the Visitation of Chaillot, we will easily find a reflection of the instruction she received at St. James. The Visitandines who were witnesses of her life tell us that when the princess returned

¹⁸ *Premier sermon pour le jour de la Passion*, I, 255-77.

home, no matter how late the hour, her first act was to go and kneel before the Blessed Sacrament. She did the same on leaving the house, "even when she had left the church only the hour previous." She was seen to ascend from the garden, when she was on the point of leaving, to do this honor to Jesus Christ. She received communion weekly, and often twice in the week. On these days she would rise very early, no matter how late she had retired, and spend more than an hour in prayer, and always confess before the Mass in which she was to receive. On solemn feasts she rose at six, received communion at the community Mass and heard other Masses until noon. At Moulins she was seen, when she accompanied King James to the waters at Bourbon, to hear a pontifical Mass on Corpus Christi which lasted almost two hours, and immediately after, as Mother de Soudeilles notes, follow the procession of the Blessed Sacrament on foot, without a sunshade, without an equerry, or any one to bear her train, a candle in her hand, an angel of modesty which awakened the admiration of all who saw her."

As to the devotion to the Sacred Heart, it was the Duchess of York who was the first of all the royal personages of Europe to ask the pope for the establishment of the solemn feast desired by Christ. Although Mother de Lucinge, superior of the monastery at Annecy, "the holy fount," declared herself towards the end of 1693, little disposed to take up "such singular practices which had only recently been introduced in honor of the Sacred Heart," Mary Beatrice, thirty months later, bravely asked for this feast for the convents of the Visitation, "preferably the Friday after the octave of the *"Santissimo."* Fearful about favoring any novelty, at a time especially when the Quietist commotion was becoming rife, the Congregation of Rites did not think that it could fully accede to this request. But in its desire to allow some consolation in the misfortunes of so deserving a person as the queen of England, on March 30, 1697, it authorized all priests who said Mass in the churches of the Visitation the Friday after the octave of Corpus Christi, to say a Mass which already was to be found in the Roman liturgy, the Mass of the Five Wounds.

Mary Beatrice must have rejoiced to recall to mind a devotion

which had been so dear to her childhood, that namely, "to the Wounds and to the sacred Side of Jesus." Later, she would have gladly repeated her requests at the court of Rome to obtain more, but on the advice of her confessor, Father Ronga, who did not think the venture opportune, consented to drop it.

In the decree of 1697 the fear of a new office was temporarily set aside. It was at least, on the initiative of the royal penitent of Father La Colombière that the first satisfaction was given to the desires of Christ on the very day chosen by Him.

24

Expansion of Soul

THREE MONTHS had slipped away since Father La Colombière's arrival in London, when towards the middle of January 1677, he went into retreat,—eight days of solitude and prayer which the Society of Jesus prescribes for its members every year. Straightway the quick glance which Claude took at his soul caused him to write:

Right now I find myself in a frame of mind quite contrary to what I had two years ago. Then I was filled with fear, and felt no inclination to works of zeal, because of the apprehension I was under of not being able to avoid the snares of the active life, in which I saw that my vocation was going to employ me. Today that fear has disappeared, and everything within me inclines me to work for the salvation and sanctification of souls. I think I have no other reason for loving life. . . . [123] ¹

What was the cause of this transformation? "It is because I no longer feel such a passion for vainglory. It is a miracle which God alone could work in me. Brilliant assignments do not affect me as

¹ The numbers in square brackets, as for those in the chapter on the tertianship, refer to the paragraphs in the edition, *Maîtres spirituels*.

they used to." This fear of becoming attached to the praise and esteem of men was formerly so annoying: a temptation that "it almost caused him to lose hope of being able to work out his own salvation while thinking of the salvation of others." [124] Today all is changed.

How did this "miracle" come about? A word of Margaret Mary's marks the beginning of it. She had just confided to him: "Our Lord has given me to understand that your soul is dear to Him and that He will take special care of it." Claude interrupted her, "Alas, how can that agree with what I feel within me? Would our Lord love so vain a person as I, one who seeks only to please men, to make himself well thought of, who is full of human respect?" "Oh, my Father," the saint had answered, "all that does not dwell in you." This observation soothed him, and "from that time these temptations began to be less frequent." [125]

Other causes contributed even more to this transformation. First, the success which God was pleased to give to the attentive care given by La Colombière to his work at Paray-le-Monial, a success that was purely spiritual, which, far from drawing on him the praises of men, rather turned them away. Then there were the assurances given in writing by Margaret Mary to her director on his departure for London, assurances the daily realization of which must have enabled him to feel the finger of God's mercy on him. [126]

Finally, before his tertianship Claude had made the acquaintance of the outward aspects only of the apostolic life: pulpit successes, only too often "sounding brass and tinkling cymbals"; some drawing-room successes at Paris even, in the company of Bouhours and Rapin. That is what he was afraid of. But after that, the dull grayness of Paray-le-Monial—an overgrown village!—had given him confidence against the fear of applause. Especially had he as a religious begun to experience the intimate contact with souls, crushing but captivating, heavy with cares, sometimes agonies, which St. Paul compares to childbearing, but which bring in exchange more blessings to the director than he dispenses. He made slow and admiring discoveries of the mysterious ways of grace in men's hearts, efforts which time and again brought leaping to the lips of the priest appeals

to God's mercy, requests for light, and sometimes the *Te Deum* of thanksgiving. In this engrossing give and take, the man of God had no time to be uneasy. He thought of himself only as the mediator, like the angels on Jacob's ladder! Even his ministry seemed to be a prayer, and he spontaneously offered it to God. This work besides is always by a special permission of the divine goodness sufficiently mingled with pains and vexations to keep him from taking too great a relish in the human joys to be found in it. If from time to time this fear passed like a mist over his spirit—"Is this really for God alone?"—the answer of St. Bernard to the demon was enough to restore his serenity: "It was not for you that I began, and I will not stop for you."

Claude looked upon a light which he received concerning his vow of poverty as one of the principal favors of his retreat. To help the preacher of the Duchess of York maintain his station at court, a pension was placed at his disposal.² This was an entirely new situation for a religious accustomed to live in community. What was he to do? If it seemed more in conformity with his vow to take of this money only that amount which was strictly necessary for his expenses, did not prudence, on the other hand, counsel some discretion? But then it would be necessary "to ask for needless dispensations." Under the pretext of propriety, was he not going "to give vainglory and self-love a very delicate diet?" Did he not also risk scandalizing those who came from France by encouraging in them a love of the world and depriving at least "the English of a good example?" And, without necessarily knowing the fable of the cobbler become rich," was Claude not going to hand himself over to all the thorns which usually accompany the vice of avarice?" [129]

Now, from the beginning of his retreat, "the thought that God had made him entirely for Himself revives in La Colombière's heart the desire "never to resist God's will," and to "follow all His inspira-

² We do not know how much this pension amounted to. But since the first confessor of the queen received three hundred pounds sterling, and the second, two hundred, we may suppose that the preacher of the Duchess of York received about half this amount, that is about three thousand gold francs. In a time when one could live decently for two or three hundred francs a year, this represented an abundant surplus.

tions." But what is God's will on the use he should make of this money? "Our Lord," he wrote, "has made it very clear to a person extremely familiar with Him (Margaret Mary, doubtless), that for a long time I was resisting Him in a certain matter where I was hesitating to do what I thought, for fear of not acting prudently." [127] But does this hint refer to the matter of the pension? On the fifth day of his retreat Claude saw it very clearly.

What could be the meaning of that word in the memorandum he had brought from France: "That he be very careful not to draw the good from its source"? He had frequently studied the expression without being able to make out its meaning. "

Today . . . I have meditated on it a fairly long time without [at first] finding any other meaning in it than that I ought to refer to God all the good which He might wish to do through me since He is the unique source. But, after having with difficulty turned my thoughts away from this subject, it suddenly became as clear as day in my mind, with the result that I see clearly that it was the solution of the doubt that troubled me during the first two or three days of my retreat about the use I ought to make of my pension. I see that there is a wealth of meaning in this word, because it has a bearing on the perfection of evangelical poverty [129]

From that time on Claude gave added precision to his "engagements, and took the vow of devoting the surplus of his pension entirely to good works, comforting the sick and the poor and supporting converts, that is, of devoting to the works of God the resources that came from God. In this way "the good would not leave its source."

We may perhaps find such an interpretation a bit arbitrary, feeling that it would have been more in conformity with the spirit of poverty to renounce the enjoyment of the pension. There is no doubt about that. But what is indeed surprising is that in order to convince himself the religious should have found so unmistakable a light in a counsel that was so ambiguous. And yet the point is certain. Claude insists on it in terms which in a mind so well balanced as his leave no room for doubt. "I cannot tell you what joy, what feelings of gratitude, what confidence in God this insight has given me. . . . Praise be

our Lord a thousand and a thousand times who has wished to let me know His mercy in this way, and the holiness of the person through whom He was pleased to give me this direction." [129] We have nothing else to do but bow and recognize that the interior touches of grace, although invisible to our eyes of flesh, have nevertheless a living reality which we cannot deny.

Besides, it is not the first time that La Colombière recognized that Margaret Mary had good grounds for her advice. The assertion that "the demons would bring all their efforts to bear against him," was not long in being realized in a way that for him was very clear. "Since my departure from Paris the demon laid five or six snares for me which have caused me some trouble, and from which I escaped only by a special grace after having committed many an act of cowardice." [128] For him the past was a guarantee of the future and gave him confidence.

The second paragraph of the memorandum conveyed the counsel that the father should have "a compassionate gentleness for sinners, and not use a strong hand with them unless God enlightened him on the matter." Claude declares that he "found in this very clearly the line he was to follow" with regard to a person whose actions since his arrival in London were displeasing to him. "This paper contained precisely all the rules I have need of." [130] The only point which is not yet verified is the criticism which was to come to him in the matter of his sermons "from persons consecrated to God." But the fulfillment was only deferred.

Such assertions, just as the lives of the saints taken as a whole, are a witness in favor of the existence in the world of a higher level of supernatural realities, which even without our knowing it, exercise a powerful influence over us. To pick up their signal, God's friends have antennae which others do not have. But will rationalist man venture to deny that nature gives to eagles, as to insects, senses which she denies to him? And because he is ignorant of our radio science would a savage have any right to deny our transmissions by radio wave? In the life and correspondence of Father La Colombière everything is profoundly reasonable, and yet there is nothing there which can be appreciated from the point of view of reason alone.

He makes his decisions according to the most meticulous rules of prudence—one has even said, thinking of his forebears, “with the prudence of a scrivener,”—but he also makes them according to sudden inspirations, and according to the advice of persons whom he knows are directly enlightened by God. We will often again see him attaching a great importance to little notes of Margaret Mary and bearing witness to the profit he draws from them.

Those who think of La Colombière as a narrow soul, cramped, tense with the effort he makes—a prisoner who has put himself into chains to live his whole life in a dungeon without light or air, without spontaneity or joy—must be recommended to read the pages, short but full, of this retreat in London. The faultfinding or self-willed tendency of the preceding retreat has disappeared, or almost so. Here all is expanding and blooming.

For the vow of fidelity to his rules which he made in the tertian-ship, Claude has nothing but thanks to God.

I have never had so much leisure to think it over so well; it has been a great joy to see myself held by a thousand chains to do God's will. I have not been frightened at the sight of so many obligations, strict and delicate as they are, because I think that God has filled me with a great confidence that I can accomplish His will in taking on myself these obligations which will help me to keep my word. [131]

A few months later, he wrote again: “The more exact I become the more I think I have entered into perfect liberty. It is certain that this does not cramp me; on the contrary, this yoke makes me, so to say, lighter.” [144]

Such facility, such gentleness are explained only by an extraordinary assistance from God. Claude is well aware of that: “It is quite obvious that without a special grace, it would be almost impossible to keep this vow.” [131] And again: “I look upon this as the greatest grace I have ever received in my life.” [144] “A special grace . . . the greatest grace. . . .” How can we doubt that it is in the mystical order?

These bonds of love were even so little troublesome that all through the course of his life La Colombière did not fear to add

others. The vow always to prefer, when he was left a choice, "the employment and the place to which he felt most repugnance";—an engagement he undertook at the end of his tertianship—the vow to devote all the money of his pension to works of charity, which we have just heard him take; finally, as Father de la Pesse testifies, "for fear that he had allowed some word to escape which might have been the occasion of some praise he would have to endure, he made a vow never to say anything which could turn to his advantage."³

In the soul of Claude there was the same bright expanding of his confidence in God. A deep feeling of unworthiness remains always in his eyes the first foundation of this virtue. The more a heart is penetrated with a sense of its miseries, the more the confidence shown in God does honor to His infinite mercy.⁴ This teaching has become so familiar to him that he is ceaselessly recalling it and adapting it, as we shall see, to the most diverse needs of his correspondents. And yet, as he progresses, this first motive of his confidence is doubled from one day to the next and becomes sweeter and more intimate. It is the fact, mysterious but precious beyond words, of the indwelling of God in the christian soul by sanctifying grace.

For a number of years La Colombière had begun to saturate himself with the sweet joys which this presence produces. On December 8, 1674, he had made, we recall in what terms, his act of complete abandonment to God, "who is always in me and in whom I am and live." "One is always at peace," he adds, "in so sure a refuge. . . . Provided that God puts up with me, I am only too happy."⁵ This is already a tendency to the prayer of simple regard.

Ever since then, instead of discursive meditation, the conscious grasp of this divine indwelling has become his chosen method of prayer. We have seen souls who were favored with the actual and persistent sense of the presence of God who, when the hour came for the official meditation prescribed by their rule, did violence to themselves to apply themselves to the line of thought proposed to

³ *Préface, op. cit.*, p. xxvi.

⁴ Cf. Chapter 9, towards end.

⁵ Cf. *loc. cit.*, same chapter.

them. But almost always in vain. A similar failure befell Claude at the time of his retreat in London.

At the end of this January the religious, as the consequence of a somewhat formal respect for custom, wished, although "he felt himself little drawn to it," "to submit to the ordinary points" of the *Exercises*, with the result that "even though God has given me many graces in this retreat, they have hardly been in my prayers. On the contrary, I have had much more trouble with them than usual. . . . When I wished to give my mind to a mystery, I was at first tired [that is to say from the beginning], and cracked my head over it." Would there not have been more profit and less fatigue

in considering God about me and in me, sustaining me and helping me, in praising His mercies, in entertaining feelings of confidence, in desires of belonging to Him without reserve . . . ? I thought that I would not be doing ill to continue in the future as I was doing before, continue to unite myself by faith with God present, and then by acts of the other virtues to which I might feel myself drawn. It seems to me that this method is not subject to illusion, because there is nothing truer than that God is within us and we in Him, and that this presence should be a great motive for respect, confidence, love, joy, fervor. [132]

The last day of the retreat, after having renewed his resolution "of setting no limits to his confidence and of extending it to everything," he ends a splendid elevation of the soul with these words: "You are everywhere in me and I in You; therefore, wherever I am, whatever danger, whatever enemy threaten me, I have my strength with You. This thought is capable of dispersing all my anxiety in a moment." [133]

Henceforth this is the motive of his confidence. Can we really imagine a soul less narrow, less tense? Even so little narrow or tense is he, that some expressions of this time, if they are taken out of their context, might give reason for thinking that he was practicing an abandonment without vigilance, impregnated with a kind of quietism. At the end of his retreat, resuming the light which God was pleased to give him during these eight days, he wrote: "The most usual feeling I have had has been a desire to abandon myself

and to forget myself completely." On the part of a man who has made the heroic vow of fidelity, this "abandonment" and this "forgetting" do not involve the slightest bit of indolence. It is the state "of a soul that has no reserves towards God," absolute destitution, complete stripping, which requires a continual vigilance and a sturdy courage. Thus, one might believe that "Claude had been afraid for so long, and that even now he is still surprised to find himself often entertaining feelings quite opposed to this complete abandonment." [136] But his ascetical life has at last so habituated him to this vigilance, that he maintains it today without tension or strain. He is even resolved "to detach himself from too great a desire which he naturally has of making great progress." This, because it is not free from self-love, "causes him to fall into great illusions, and might get him involved in notable indiscretions." [142] Later, in the course of his accumulated experiences in London, his conviction on this point becomes so strong that he formulates it as a general and universal maxim: "There is no peace except in the complete forgetfulness of self; we must be determined even to forget our spiritual interests, so as to seek only the pure glory of God." [143] If sometime later he wrote, "Every day I feel more devotion to St. Francis de Sales," is it not because he has noted in the Bishop of Geneva a frequent reminder of this teaching? From that time his soul finds itself established in such serenity, that the mere words, "*Confidence, Humility, entire Abandonment, No Reserve, God's Will, My Rules*," he writes, "never become present to my mind, but that light, peace, liberty, sweetness and love enter at the same time." [147]

The spiritual development of any number of saints would give rise to similar observations. A recent study on "the sensitivity of St. Augustine," shows how the piety of the great doctor was gradually transformed in the direction of self-forgetfulness and apostolic devotion, and that it is not in the earlier works, such as the *Soliloquies* and the *Confessions*, but in the *Tractatus in Joannem*, that we must look for their complete development.

It is all this taken together, especially what La Colombière indicates above on his increasing difficulty in discursive meditation,

which led the historian of the *Sentiment religieux en France* to write of him: "Mystic? Not yet, but just on the threshold. Or rather, already a mystic without knowing it. It is still common prayer, in appearance at least, but arrived at that point of simplification at which it becomes insensibly real contemplation." Only, it is strange that the author adds: "He was lacking, I admit, a Lallemand or a Surin to make known to him his proper vocation." As if the whole life of La Colombière does not furnish the proof that sometimes God knows how to pass over human intermediaries in making known His plans.

Better informed, Father de la Pesse is more forthright. Speaking of persons who had been benefited by La Colombière's direction—and he could not ignore Margaret Mary—he says: "Far from thinking that I have tried to confine all his merit to this preface, they would think ill of me for having deprived this great servant of God of a good deal of glory. There are some of them who know that heaven has honored him with extraordinary graces and that marvels have been performed in his favor, which are strong proofs of the high rank he holds before God." He adds an excuse for such a silence. "I must not," he says, "betray the modesty of the living just to give honor to the dead." What is more, among mystical gifts, those of prayer are not the only ones. Insight into souls, the sureness of a spiritual diagnosis which was so frequent in Claude, where so many others did not in the least understand, and which made him, as some one has said, "a kind of supernatural microphone, which was capable of picking up God's voice anywhere"—all this proves that there was in this man the gifts of counsel and of wisdom in a very high degree.

We have said that the act of "oblation to the Sacred Heart of Jesus Christ," which was placed by the first editors at the end of the *Spiritual Notes*, constitutes in fact their natural crown. It marks for La Colombière the end of his ascent. A complete stripping and forgetting of self "and of all that can have any reference to self," there is no sincere and loyal oblation without this previous condition. It is required, declares La Colombière "to remove the obstacle which might prevent our entering into this divine heart." [151] It is the very

simple remark of a spiritual experience, but infinitely precious, as it suffices to help us fix the three successive stages in the ascent of this soul, and to mark the wonderful unity of his progress in holiness. In the tertianship, the vow of fidelity to every will of God is the starting point from which we discern especially the human contribution which is made up of generosity and courage. Then a life of constant union and of prayer in the sweetest confidence and fullest surrender: it is God's answer which fulfills the promise, "Give, and it will be given to you": liberality, which "pours into the soul the good measure, pressed down and overflowing" (Luke 6:8). And, finally, the complete gift of all his powers, satisfaction, religious practices, merits, and virtues to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, so that the soul being entirely stripped even of its own will, Jesus "does His will in it," thus realizing the truth of St. Paul: "For me to live is Christ" (Phil. 1:21). Such are, as far as the eye of man can penetrate these splendors and his tongue express them, the three stages by which the Holy Spirit led Blessed Claude in his ascent towards the perfect love of God.

25

The Burden of Souls

IN HIS biographical notes on La Colombière Father de la Pesse writes:

The desire he conceived of having some share in the misfortunes of the English Catholics also served as a spur to his fervor in the service of God. Whoever writes of his activity will have no trouble in supporting his work with the record of great achievements, if he tells of the striking effect of [Claude's] zeal, his prudence, and his piety; if he speaks of the apostates he brought back to the Church, of the Catholics whom he drew from high society, of the wicked whom he deeply moved, whom he won by his sermons which were so full of strength and wisdom. His undertakings and

their success, all the consequences of his ministry, will supply the historian with excellent material.¹

Perhaps . . . We ask only that the writer of this Preface be given credence. But instead of these stately generalities, the excellent father would have done better by the man he admired had he given us some concrete details on these "striking effects of his zeal." Assertions of this kind furnish the historian only with the possibilities of excellent material. But they add to his regrets.

Can we fall back on his correspondence to find these details? Discretion prevented La Colombière from putting everything on paper. Discretion is necessary for every director of consciences, but especially so at a time when converts ran the risk of a confiscation of goods, or even imprisonment. For the rest, even the letters which have been preserved are far from being whole and entire, for reasons which we shall specify later. It is, nevertheless, by making use of the confidences we do find in them, especially in the letters to Mother de Saumaise, that we shall be able to see something of Claude's apostolate in London. That will naturally serve us as an introduction to a more general study of his correspondence, and will allow us to penetrate the secrets of his direction. It is a fortunate restriction, since, according to the testimony of Margaret Mary who was speaking from experience, Father La Colombière's talent was that of drawing souls to God.

"I confess that ever since providence brought me to this kingdom," declared the preacher at St. James, "I never think of the great number of souls that are here perishing without having my heart pierced with sorrow."² A sorrowing and compassionate love, the foremost quality of a director. A practical love also, and that in the smallest things. A month had hardly passed when he said: "I am already accustomed to English life, just as though I had been brought up in London." And Father de la Pesse wrote on his own account: "He is eating English food, although he has a great repugnance for it and suffers much from it."³ He shows no regret even for the fair

¹ *Préface*, *op. cit.*, p. xxiii.

² *Deuxième sermon pour la Passion*, I, 301.

³ *Préface*, p. xxv.

sky of Avignon. Of the London sun, which in the "dark winter days buries itself in the fog until night," La Colombière notes pleasantly: "He shows himself at the moment of rising as though to notify men that he is beginning his course, and that if they do not see him the rest of the day, he is still present." Claude is satisfied with this morning glimmer, a symbol of the fleeting manifestation granted the world by Jesus on the day of His Epiphany.⁴

In London, as French was the language only of the court and diplomatic circles, he very quickly learned English. Had he not made a vow to observe all his rules? One of them runs: "They should learn the language of the place where they reside." Speaking of his letters to an English Visitandine of Charolles, he notes: "If the sister directrix does not approve of my using this foreign language, you must tell me so." And to a religious who had just lost her father: "I am writing a word in English to your good mother. I wish I knew this language better, so as to give her a better and a longer expression of my thoughts."

Despite his efforts to adapt himself difficulties were not long in appearing. In the month of February: "There is no kind of snare that the devil has not laid for me." Some time later: "Here I see hardly anything but scandal, and I need some one to teach me what I can use as a preservative against the bad air one breathes in a heretic land." Or again: "I run no risks here, except for my soul, which is exposed to every imaginable peril." And again: "Here there are dangers without number, and I have no other helps except those that come from God."

But optimism never fails to prevail. If he finds "great disorders to correct," he also finds "much courage in the people." He wrote to his brother Humbert: "In the midst of the complete corruption which heresy has begotten in this great city, I find a deal of fervor and virtues of high perfection. . . . Dear God, the saintly women I have known herel You would be surprised if I told you how they lived." And to Mother de Saumaise: "Every day I see fresh and great effects of God's grace in souls. . . . Today I received the abjuration of a young woman who before had been very obstinate. Pray to God

⁴ *Sermon pour le jour de l'Épiphanie*, I, 205.

for her. It is hardly a week since I had another. God is wonderful everywhere. I could write a book of the mercies He has shown me since I have been here."

Furthermore, he was persuaded that one person who aims at perfection gives more glory to God than a hundred who are mediocre, and consequently, he felt "a stronger desire to help those who were tending to perfection, and to give this desire to those who did not have it." The preacher made no secret of this ambition before his audience in St. James: "I do not find any difficulty in proposing these points of a rather lofty spirituality, because I am convinced, and it is experience that has convinced me, that one has too little confidence in the good will of one's hearers, and that a good many people crawl because they do not know how to raise themselves . . . Should there be only one soul destined to belong entirely to God, I would be in desperation if through my fault it lacked the necessary instruction."⁵ How could any one remain deaf to such an appeal?

"I am forced to say to my confusion," Claude confides to Mother de Saumaise, "that God makes use of me every day to train souls to piety, who in a very short time surpass me in everything. . . . I behold the fairest hopes in the world, but I tremble continually for fear of bringing everything to ruin by my infidelities. I have now five or six who are coming to me to make their abjuration of heresy, two of whom have been religious. The others are two young French women and a young Englishman."

The following month, all were making progress: "There are three or four who have no reserves with God and who do everything I ask of them." And two weeks later, on the feast of the Visitation:

Two young women of about twenty years of age have chosen this day to consecrate themselves to God by a vow of perpetual chastity. . . . Two young widows wish to do likewise, but I thought it better to defer them until the Assumption. Our Lord sends me souls every day who I think are chosen, and who give themselves to Him very generously. Three of them are thinking of entering religion, and two others have been coming to me for some time now, who, I think, are not far from it.

⁵ *Cinquième méditation sur la Passion*, V, 55.

How did La Colombière draw such souls to Christian perfection in the world and in the cloister? First of all, by convincing them that the total gift of oneself to God is the necessary condition of true happiness. It is not without purpose that the first paper in *Réflexions chrétiennes* has to do with the "Sweetness of Virtue." The world says that the yoke of Christ is unsupportable, but Christ Himself says that it is sweet. The world, that is, they who know nothing about them, say that His commandments are difficult; but all those who have made the trial say the opposite." Hence, the attitude of good people is unanswerable. Since "everybody is looking for joy, we shall never draw the world to good, unless we give it hope. . . . Thus, as one will allow himself to be drawn only by joy, he will not be induced to change except by a greater joy."⁶

But how can we convey such a conviction if we ourselves are sad and weighed down? Contentment must radiate from us. And this is why Claude is not disconcerted. "If the rewards which God grants here below to those who give themselves to Him without reserve could be known . . .," he tells his hearers, "we should see the greater part of the world take the side of devotion."⁷

Jesus Christ has promised the hundredfold, and I can say that I have never done anything without receiving, not a hundred times, but a thousand times more than I have given up. 'How good is God to Israel: to them that are of a right heart' (Ps. 72:1). O Israel, if thou knewest how good thy God is, how liberal! He is so towards His enemies, but for those who serve Him there is a profusion of caresses, of sweetness about which we cannot speak and about which we cannot be silent, and which we can hardly bear.⁸

And yet, how many obstacles there are to overcome if we are to persuade ourselves effectively! The fear of what people will say seems to have been, in the circles with which the apostle was dealing, one of the greatest—he even said, "the greatest obstacle in the way of true devotion." "Every day we see that the fear of being scoffed at, or of passing for a bigot or a hypocrite, stifles most of our

⁶ *Oeuvres*, V, 121, 124.

⁷ *Deuxième sermon pour le jour de l'Ascension*, I, 424.

⁸ *Premier sermon pour le jour de la Transfiguration*, II, 99.

good resolutions. This vain apprehension is what ruins nearly all of God's plans."⁹ The power of a shadowy specter which more than anything else makes him desolate.

When I see those who are fully persuaded, fully convinced, who have neither too much attachment to their possessions, nor too much love of pleasure, who are acquainted with holiness, who feel that God is calling them to it, and who nevertheless disregard all these feelings, who render all these dispositions fruitless through human respect, by reflecting on what others are thinking of them, when others have perhaps never even given them a thought, yes, my brethren, my heart is pierced with sorrow, and I can hardly console myself.¹⁰

Others make an objection out of their unworthiness. Aim at perfection? Presumption, madness! Who is to blame? The director answers:

If you do not go to the source whence grace is drawn . . . you should not be surprised that you have no feeling for virtue. Now, tell me, when have you under the goad of temptation cast your eyes upon your crucifix to ask help? When has the fear of falling led you to cast yourself upon the ground, and from the bottom of your heart, utter these words, or others like them: *Domine, salva nos, perimus*, Lord, I am lost if You do not have pity on me?¹¹

These exhortations did not produce the same effect on all. Among his hearers, the preacher had noticed "a young widow of twenty-seven or twenty-eight," who "never failed to come to the sermon, and there weep in front of everybody."

Amidst the corruption that is nearly universal, this lady who is of the very highest rank, has kept her reputation unsullied, although her beauty and her wit have exposed her to the strongest temptations. Very frequently she has the desire to give herself to God, and even to leave everything. But she is rich, she is prominent, and she cannot bring herself to renounce the emptiness of it all.

⁹ *Premier sermon pour le jour de la Purification*, II, 227.

¹⁰ *Quatrième méditation sur la Passion*, V, 41.

¹¹ *Pour le jour de la Circoncision*, I, 165.

Undoubtedly he was pointing out by these words Lady Sophie Bulkeley, cousin of Charles II, and lady of honor to the Duchess of York. It was of her that Ambassador Courtin, who called her "Madame Baucley" said that she is "after Madame Middleton, the most beautiful woman in England." La Colombière added:

It would be a great example if this lady did something for God; for surely there is no woman in all the court who can be compared with her for beautiful qualities of body and of mind. She weeps bitterly over the resistance she offers to God, assuring me that she never thought that God would ever have convinced any one more of the vanity of the world and of our obligations towards Him. . . . It is strange how the demon makes use of a false respect for the body of Christ with which he has inspired her to keep her away. Having promised that at least for three months she would receive every two weeks, she manifested such difficulty that I felt sorry for her. She even said that all I demanded of her was nothing in comparison, and that in making this request I pierced her heart. I stood firm, however, and she made me the promise.

Four and a half months later she was at last "fully converted," with "so much regret for not having left all for God, that she all but died of sorrow." Sophie Bulkeley was to keep Mary Beatrice company as lady of honor while she was heir to the throne, and later in her exile at Saint-Germain.

Grace acted very differently in the instance of another widow, who was also of very noble rank.

I complained of the slow progress of the other. This one has cost me nothing. Everything was finished with the first conversation. . . . God had begun by giving her consolations which she could not put into words. In a short time He had her take all the steps . . . to detach herself from all things and to remove all hope [of whosoever approaching her]. Today she is suffering terribly. I have never seen anything like it. The devil is doing his best to make her lose heart, but our Lord is upholding her wonderfully.

Another time "it is a young man, a merchant twenty-four years of age," who came to consult the father "about a plan he had of leaving the world and going off to spend his days in an unknown

country, living on alms and giving himself up to all kinds of austerities, which the strength of his sturdy body seemed fully capable of enduring." A kind of Benedict Labre or Father de Foucauld.¹² La Colombière kept him under observation, and at the end of two months saw that the spirit of prayer to which our Lord had already raised him, "increased every day with such special and delicate lights on the practice of the most excellent virtues, that he could not sufficiently admire it."

Why should we be surprised at some resistance, when we think of the total spoliation which the director demanded in God's name? In the following chapter, his correspondence will make these demands more specific. What is more surprising is that he was able in so short a time to lead so many hearts to perfection.

This "talent of leading souls to God," of which Margaret Mary spoke, was not merely the result of a very special gift from heaven, but also of natural qualities patiently developed. He was a shrewd observer and psychologist, accustomed to analyze his own interior, and therefore expert in penetrating that of others, those labyrinths where so often conscience hides even from itself and is lost. He had a mind that was clear and balanced and systematic, and he knew how to prescribe the proper remedy and the saving regime for each according to his needs. If his smiling kindness succeeded in having them accepted, it was because with his prescriptions, his penitents felt that he was giving all his heart, the heart of a saint. Like his Master he gave neither teaching nor counsel that he had not first practiced himself, and that carried more persuasion than anything else.

Are we to list Claude's relations with Charles II among his apostolic ministries? During the lifetime of this prince, Father de la Pesse asserts as a known fact that La Colombière "had the honor of conversing three or four times with the king of England."¹³ One

¹² Benedict Joseph Labre (1748-53), canonized in 1881. Charles Eugene Foucauld born 1858 and killed by the Tuaregs in the Sahara, Dec. 1, 1916. His cause has been introduced.

¹³ *Préface*, p. xxv. Father Charrier, following Father Boero, makes some account of a story of a certain Jacques Stuart, called Jacques de la Cloche du Bourg de Jersey, who passed himself off as a natural son of Charles II, and

may suppose that these conversations had as their object the ever-desired conversion,—ever in suspense—of the monarch. Doubtless, Charles' conduct was more than flighty and permitted the religious only a long range hope. Did he not owe him at least, as he did all sinners, a "sympathetic gentleness?"¹⁴

abjured Protestantism at Hamburg in 1667. The following year, 1668, this Jack Stuart entered the novitiate of the Jesuits at Rome, and a few months later came to London under the name of Henri Rohan to treat, it was said, of the conversion of the king to Catholicism. After his return to Rome as negotiator, all trace of him is lost, except that it could be learned with some certainty that he had returned to England. (Father Charrier, *op. cit.*, 140-42. Cf. Boero, *Istoria della conversione di Carlo II*, 80 pp., Rome: 1863).

At the beginning of this century this story awakened the curiosity of researchers. See the *Revue des deux Mondes*, November 15, 1903 (article by T. de Wyzewa) and *l'Ami du Clergé*, March 24, 1904. More recently, in an article entitled *King Charles II's Jesuit Son*, appearing in the *Month*, December, 1927, Father Thurston concludes for a number of serious reasons that the letters of Charles II recognizing James as his son and recommending him to Father Oliva are forgeries. James Stuart, called de la Cloche du Bourg de Jersey, *alias* Henri de Rohan, would therefore "be a bold and successful swindler, who took in, not only the general of the Jesuits, but Lord Acton and a whole generation of guileless historians." One could, however, insist and observe that at the end of the catalogue of the English province for 1676 among those who in that year *accesserunt ad provinciam*, appears a Father John Stuart, who is described as the sixth among the fathers of the "St. Michael's Residence, or Mission of York." The variation in forenames not being rare at the time in the catalogues, for the same religious, this father, who "arrived in the province" in 1676, as a priest, might well be the James Stuart, who was a novice in 1668. (Cf. also Laloy, *Enigmes du grand siècle*, Paris: 1913, pp. 19-40). This historical puzzle has only a remote interest in the mission of Blessed Claude. We do not take sides in the dispute.

¹⁴ On reading certain reflections of Blessed Claude, the fifth day of his London retreat, and a letter a little later to Mother de Saumaise, we ask whether the person of whom he speaks is not Charles II. Alluding to the advice of Margaret Mary, who had recommended that he have "a gentle compassion for sinners," he wrote: "I have found in it a remedy against a temptation which has caused me a good deal of trouble since I have been here. In it I find very clearly the behavior I ought to have observed with regard to a person *whose conduct displeases me*" (*Italics ours*). The letter returns to the same subject, and adds this detail: "I have no doubt that that concerns the first person who presented himself to me on my arrival" (VI, 111, 337). One person whose conduct might cause La Colombière some displeasure, which would become a "temptation" and which continues after more than three months, is evidently not an ordinary person. And if in fact Claude had wished to speak of the king—whose conduct

In a few years, when the Anglican bishops proposed to the king on his deathbed, "the last helps of this Protestant communion, of which, for the few hours remaining to him of life he was the head," Charles II, while "giving signs of sorrow for his sins," bowed them out, and indicated to the Duke of York his firm desire of dying in the old religion of his mother, his little sister, and the queen, his wife.¹⁵ Into the hands of Father Huddleston, "this man, Sire, who after saved your life, comes now to save your soul,"—in the presence of the two Protestant Earls of Bath and of Feversham, who were required as witnesses, Charles pronounced his abjuration, and then in the fullness of his faculties received extreme unction and holy communion. Thus, "entering at the hour of his *viaticum*," says Arthur Bryant, "the portals of the ancient communion in which all but two or three of the many Christian men and women from whom he was descended had lived and died" (*op. cit.*, 369). Many indications allow us to affirm that this conversion was not a mere matter of feeling, but the result of a sincere conviction, unfortunately thwarted by unheard of intrigues of secret politics. Must we lay the accusation of pure hypocrisy on all the secret negotiations carried on after the *Treaty of Dover*, especially through the intermediary of Coleman and Father Saint-Germain? Why, if he were not haunted by a nostalgia for Catholicism, did Charles go so often to the Catholic chapels of the queen and Mary Beatrice, there to hear the sermons, or to be present at the services? There is more yet. How otherwise explain the two documents declared to have been found "in the little box of the late king, my brother, written in his own hand"? They contain a detailed account in at least five or six pages of many conversations on the only true Church, founded by Jesus Christ, which "cannot be any other than that which is called the Roman Catholic Church." They were doubtless arguments drawn up by a priest, and which the king had copied out himself to avoid compromising their author.

was in fact very displeasing—prudence and discretion would forbid his doing so in more open terms.

¹⁵ The whole scene, the 5th and 6th of February, has been told with delicacy and dignity by Arthur Bryant, *King Charles II*, 367–70.

The conversations of La Colombière, mentioned by Father de la Pesse, could have exercised an influence on this conversion of Charles II. Are not the saints on this earth the visible signs of God and the natural transmitters of His grace? Must we also attribute to Claude the drawing up of the two documents so carefully preserved by the king? Some would wish so, and in these pages have claimed to find "his style, his simple manner of reasoning, calm and lively, even his procedure in the use of the authorities whom he quoted."¹⁶ But such an effort at internal criticism seems to us to be rather delusive.

What is certain is that on July 12, 1678, La Colombière wrote to Mother de Saumaise: "I get a glimpse of great successes which I think God is preparing for His glory." And on the 19th of the following September: "I have in my hands the most promising hopes in the world for next year." Or again, in October, this hint: "I see a great harvest," followed by the guarded admission, "I may not write you all."¹⁷ Each one is free to interpret these words as he pleases. But it is quite possible, although beyond all proof, that they concern the hopes held out to Claude by his conversations with the king of England.

In the spring of 1678 the Jesuits in all lands held their provincial congregations, which usually meet every three years. Each congregation is made up of forty members, comprising the rectors and the oldest professed of each province. In a kingdom like England, where every priest of British citizenship was excluded under pain

¹⁶ Charrier, *Histoire du P. de la Colombière*, II, 148. The Presbyterian, Gilbert Burnet, bishop of Salisbury and a contemporary of Charles II, declares that "these papers were probably written either by the Earl of Bristol or by Lord Aubigny, who knew the secret of his religious faith. Perhaps they had given them to him as extracts of the conferences which they had had with him on this matter, to fix them better in the memory. It is very probable that these two lords, fearing some danger for themselves if these papers were found written in their hand, Charles had the complaisance to transcribe them in his. . . . He had told me a great part of what was contained in these two writings, and when I saw them not only did I recall the expressions, but I remarked that he had gone into the matter as far as they had been able to lead him" (Quoted in an appendix by Hume in his *Histoire de la Maison de Stuart*, III, 493 ff.).

¹⁷ VI, 380, 385, 387 ff.

of death, such a meeting seemed something like a challenge. And this all the more, because a large number of delegates had to come from houses established in exile in northern France or Flanders. The congregation took place, however, but under exceptional conditions. With the consent of the Duke of York, who wished to give to his chaplain, Father Bedingfield, a member of the congregation, this mark of friendship, it was held in the Palace of St. James. La Colombière, not belonging to the English province, and being besides too young in profession, was not a member of the congregation. But apart from these official meetings, what a joy it must have been to find himself the member of a community if only for a brief interval. And what a thrill it would have given him, could he have foreseen that of these forty members, nine would bear witness to their faith even to martyrdom, six on the scaffold and three in the torture chambers of a prison!¹⁸

This congregation, the dark plots of which Titus Oates was to proclaim to the world a few months later, held three modest sessions, "which because of the danger were crowded into two mornings, and the business transacted as speedily as the institute of the Society permitted. On April 24th, after the recitation of the *Veni Creator* and the reading of the rules governing the meetings, business was limited to verifying credentials and to nominating secretaries; it was a meeting concerned with mere formalities. The following day, the second session was busy with electing Father Carly as deputy to the general congregation in Rome, and Father Keynes as substitute. The third session followed immediately and voted on the two "postulata," which concerned business of the Order and were to be presented to the Reverend Father General. It then discussed some points of discipline dealing with the "uniformity of customs" to be maintained among the dispersed religious. That

¹⁸ Of this glorious congregation, the following were put to the torture at Tyburn: Father Ireland, procurator of the province, January 4, 1679; Fathers Harcott (or Whitbread), provincial, Waring (or Harcourt), Fenwick and Turner, June 20, 1679; and at Usk, Father Baker. The following died of their sufferings in prison: Father Harvey (or Mico), socius to the provincial, December 3, 1678; Bedingfield (or Mumford), December 21, 1678; and lastly, Father Jenison, September 27, 1679.

done, the fathers declared the congregation adjourned. They approved the minutes as read, "recited the *Te Deum* in a low voice, took leave of each other, and returned each to his allotted mission and apostolic labors." Happy the nations which have never had their peace disturbed by more dangerous conspirators!

But what Titus Oates and his accomplices—and even Shaftesbury—never knew was the place where these peaceful meetings were so boldly held. They thought they took place where in fact the plot of their fellow conspirators were hatched, in a gambling hall at the White Horse tavern.

In the life of La Colombière these fraternal joys marked but a brief interlude. For him his daily bread was made from labors ever more above his strength, and sometimes, we should note, from failures. This was very good for his humility. This ill success, he confessed, increased "in my heart a very strong and very clear conviction of the little or nothing which we contribute to the conversion of souls, a very clear view of my nothingness."¹⁹ Eight months after his arrival in London he realized that he had been deceived "two or three times, and perhaps four" by apostates. From a distance, Mother de Saumaise warned him to be more cautious. "Thanks be to God," he answered, "for me it is no more than money lost."

Besides, even when a strayed sheep returns to the fold, the joys of the apostle are often mingled with suffering. Margaret Mary had foretold that "even persons who are consecrated to God would cause him trouble, and would not approve the direction he gave to souls." More than a year passed before this was verified. Suddenly the storm broke and, he observes, with regard to the one person whose spontaneous conversion "had cost me nothing." "I was tempted to give it all up, fearing an explosion which would cause scandal, I thought, and violate charity." "Very much to the purpose," Claude recalls the prediction, and courage returns together with confidence.

So much work, however, ended by laying him low. At the end of 1677 a word in his correspondence permits us to foresee it. He had just written: "I have good health, thanks be to God!" And suddenly, as though he had some kind of presentiment, "I do not know how

¹⁹ *Notes spirituelles de Londres*, VI, 121.

long it will last." On the approach of Lent, the next year, his fears were realized: "As to my health, about which you seem to be exhorting me so often, it is certainly not good. . . . And if this continues, I'm afraid that my congregation is not going to be well preached at." Two months later he admits that preaching imposes on him "more of a cross, both inwardly and outwardly, than would appear." "Concern for souls begets a thousand anxieties, because of the resistance they offer to grace, or the inconstancy of the human spirit on which we can place so little reliance."

Finally, on a fresh urging from Mother de Saumaise, Claude can no longer hide the exhaustion which is sapping his strength: "It is true that I feel a bit uncomfortable in the chest, where I used to think I was impregnable. In this country one is easily susceptible because of the hard coal they burn, which gives off a nasty smoke. I don't mind it much yet. I believe that study contributes more than anything else external."

Hard coal, study . . . were these the causes? It is curious that about the same time, to explain a sore throat from which Charles II was suffering, Courtin wrote: "It is an ailment very common to those who live in London, and is an effect of coal dust." Still more, doubtless, an effect of the fogs, and in La Colombière's case, a result of austerities. In the tertianship, thanking God for the favors with which He had flooded his soul at Christmas, he said: "You drive me to excesses. What would I not do to merit for one moment the sweetness with which You fill me, if You did not oblige me to obey my director?" Left to himself in London, would he not give himself over to these excesses? Instead of forbidding "them ever to light a special fire for him," would it not have been better for him to accept a little warmth for his body, even if it were produced by this hard coal? Doubtless he was aware of that, because three months after Lent he wrote, speaking of the souls that had been entrusted to him: "I take hardly any care of myself, and I offer for their progress many things which seem opposed to my own interests. I don't want to have any interests but God's." The result was, "I began to cough up blood on the eve of the Assumption. . . . I abandon all to Providence."

Now, it happened—a coincidence too remarkable to be mere chance—that at each one of these trials, disappointments in the apostolate, health troubles, a message from Margaret Mary, brief but compact, arrived from Paray-le-Monial to encourage him. On May 3, 1677, he notes: "I thought I understood everything in Sister Alacoque's last note, except the final word, *without reserve*. That covers so much ground that I am very much afraid that I do not carry out this advice." On April 30, 1678: "I am so strongly confirmed in my faith in the things which our Savior reveals to her, whether of the past or the future, that I think I no longer gain any merit in believing." On May 6th: "I do not think that without the note containing Sister Alacoque's advice, I should ever have been able to bear the pains I have suffered, and which never attacked me with greater violence than when I was weighed down and almost overwhelmed with work." On May 9th: "I have received three or four notes from her, which make up all the happiness of my life. May God be blessed forever, who deigns to enlighten us, poor and blind as we are, by the lights of persons who communicate more intimately with Him." June 27th: "I do not know how to make you understand how timely this warning was. If she had had a look into my interior, she would not have been able to tell me anything more precise."

It is in this period, in fact, that the incident related by Mother de Saumaise took place. Our Lord "having caused" Margaret Mary "to see the crosses and the interior pains which Father La Colombière would suffer in England," she informed the superior and gave her a note addressed to her director, "which contained some very consoling things which Jesus Christ had dictated to her." Instead of merely forwarding this letter, Mother de Saumaise made a copy of it, "without letting any one know of it." "Nevertheless," she related, "the sister came looking for us, and told me that in copying it I had changed something, and that our Lord did not want any change in what He had written for him. On re-reading it, I found in fact that I had inserted some words, which although they were similar, were, however, much less forceful."

Following on the hemorrhage in August, Claude "found himself

so depressed and weakened," that he did not feel capable of facing the labors of a new year. Now, the very day on which he had decided to leave England, coming from a consultation with the doctor, "I received," he wrote to Mother de Saumaise, "your letter and the note written in her hand. . . . I began to change my mind, and I think that I shall continue to remain here. I am quite ready to live or die here. . . ." There follow two pages of projects and fresh plans.

But the illness had laid hold of him implacably, redoubling his indecision:

..

I almost died from a new spitting of blood. I have been on the point of leaving, to return to France, because my superiors here have left it to my choice, and most people here advise me to do so. The doctors have restrained me, saying that I was in no condition to make the journey, and that I could be cured here. . . . I am able neither to write nor to talk, and hardly to pray. I have never had such a desire to work, and I can do nothing. May God's will be done. I am not worthy of serving Him.

As an end to this painful admission: "I am in my present condition through my own fault. I beg our Lord to punish me and to forgive me."

Persecution was to put a brutal period to this wavering. But before we behold this last "beatitude" place an aureole around the brow of La Colombière, we ought to finish the account of his labors in "the land of crosses," and tell how from London innumerable messages came from his pen to enlighten souls, and were sent abroad full of wisdom and of love.

Correspondence and Direction

FULLY given as he was to the apostolate, La Colombière did not, however, forget France and the souls he had left there. The "large number of people to whom he had to talk or write," left him without a moment's leisure.

The result was a very large correspondence of which only a very small part has come down to us. Although less than a year after Claude's death, the archbishop of Lyons had approved a collection of his *Spiritual Letters*, none was published before 1715. Far from blaming his correspondents for this delay, we ought rather to be grateful to them for having with such good grace surrendered treasures which laid bare their secrets. And why should we complain if from these letters they have withheld the most intimate pages from the curious eyes of the public, pages which often would have been for us the most interesting because of their practical psychology. After a hesitation of thirty-two years a determination was reached to publish a first collection. As some of the correspondents were still living, the editors in 128 out of the 139 letters, suppressed not only the names of the recipients, but also "certain particulars, which would have held them up to notice." The date and place of origin have frequently disappeared; sometimes even the text was "altered" to give a wrong scent, with the result that some facts reported in one and the same letter are not in agreement as to time and place. Moreover, La Colombière being held responsible for the devotion to the Sacred Heart which was so bitterly attacked in 1715, it is much to be feared that many details which might have given point to the criticism have been deleted. This fact will account for the extensive efforts made to honor the Sacred Heart being forever put beyond the possibility of being known. But in spite of the extensive trimming, the character of the writer was too well known

for the editors to succeed in publishing only a "manual of the perfect director," in the form of a collection of letters. And yet if we read the five autograph letters which are extant, and compare them with the others, we cannot help fearing that many a nuance and many a trace of healthy and smiling culture, which gave to this correspondence its own seal and mark, have disappeared from the hundred and forty-four letters, of which we possess only the printed versions.

At the cost of patient researches Father Charrier has been able to establish the name, or at least the quality, of nearly all of La Colombière's correspondents: his brother Humbert,* his Visitandine sister Elizabeth, a few Jesuits, Messire Bouillet, curé of Paray-le-Monial, St. Margaret Mary and Mother de Saumaise, Madame Houel de Morainville, abbess of the Bénissons-Dieu, Madame and Mademoiselle de Lyonne, both Mademoiselles Mayneaud de Bisefranc, and various nuns of the Visitation and the Ursulines. There is no trace of the letters that Claude wrote, perhaps to Cardinal Bouillon, and certainly to Father de la Chaize, his former rector and provincial.

At the time the first collection of letters appeared, there were numerous works on Christian asceticism or mysticism which were presented in rather oversubtle language, the strangeness of which frequently served as a cloak for Jansenist or Quietist errors. For this reason the editors of 1715 took the pains to observe: "The letters of this holy director are not a heap of mysterious terms without any meaning," and which are likely "to flatter the vanity of persons who think that they are on a very high level of perfection, because they are spoken to in a language they do not understand. They will not find here new ways of perfection, which are always suspect. These letters have no tendency—an illusion very common in our day—to be mistaken in devotion by substituting what is superficial and accessory for what is solid and essential." To avoid all misconception, this "essential" of "Christian and religious perfection," to which in fact Father La Colombière never ceases to urge, was thus specified: It is "the practice of the solid virtues which unite the soul perfectly with God by the destruction of self-love." Thus these *Letters* will

be profitable not only for those who are aiming at perfection, but for their directors also.

Descending at once to details, the first point to which the editors call attention in this correspondence—and it is indeed noteworthy when we recall that they were writing in the full blast of the Jansenist tempest, two years after the Bull *Unigenitus*—is an indefatigable appeal for confidence. “They will learn not to cast into perplexity or discouragement a soul that has fallen into serious sins; but to profit from these falls to raise it to a higher sanctity, by great confidence in the infinite mercy of God, a deeper humility, etc.”¹

In fact, La Colombière is tireless in warring against the uneasiness caused by our past sins and by the conviction of our misery. He himself has been through it all. Perhaps, under the unconscious influence of the Solitaries of Port Royal inviting the soul to the perpetual contemplation of its innate decadence, he had felt even in his flesh the shudder of that despair which seizes us, sometimes at the very moment when God is getting ready to overwhelm us with His favors. How vigorously, when he recalls it, does he not condemn this fear of the young abbess of the Bénissons-Dieu: “When I feel that I am weak, it is then that I am strong,” because, “I can do all things in Him who strengthens me.” It is a long time since his theology of confidence was firmly established on this rock. Now he exploits it. “The weakest of all creatures,” he writes to a Visitandine, “has no more reason for discouragement than the strongest, because our confidence is in God, who is equally strong both for the strong and the weak.” “You cannot get it sufficiently into your head that it is He [our Lord] principally who, apart from our sins, does everything in us, and that we should have no regard for our faults and weaknesses, but look for everything from Him alone.”

If one objected: “But I am making no progress in correcting my faults,” he answers, “One does not cease advancing in the love of God by warring against them. It is for God to destroy my passions, and He will do so when He pleases. But it is for me to hold them in check, and to prevent them from breaking loose and drawing me into sin.” And then: “You would have to be in a perpetual affliction,

¹ Oeuvres, VI, 237.

if you were to afflict yourself for all the faults that you commit. You should be content with humbling yourselves before God and accepting the mortifications which they cause you." Besides, these defects may even become the source of merit. "Whatever makes you desolate and believe that you are lost, if borne with patience, humility, and conformity with God's will, would be changed into a treasure which would make you richer in a day than would all the consolations and ecstasies of a year."

Even if a fresh fall should happen, the advice does not vary. One of the three English ladies who had entered the Visitation of Charolles was in a state of despair because of her rebellion against some demands of the common life. "What afflicts me," answered her director, "is less the faults you have committed than the pitiable condition in which these faults have placed you. . . . The evil is great, but . . . it can become a wonderful remedy to cure you entirely of all pride and presumption." And from this heart, so wonderfully sympathetic with human weaknesses, there gushed suddenly the sweetest and most comforting prayer:

If I were in your place, this is how I would console myself. I would say to God with confidence: 'Lord, behold a soul who is in the world to exercise Your admirable mercy, and to make it blaze out in the presence of heaven and earth. Others will glorify You in making visible the power of Your grace, by their fidelity and constancy, showing how sweet and generous You are to those who are faithful to You. For my part I will glorify You by making known how good You are to sinners, and that Your mercy is higher than all malice, that nothing can exhaust it, that no relapse, however shameful and guilty it may be, need cause a sinner to despair of pardon. I have grievously offended You, O my lovable Redeemer, but it would be worse still if I committed the horrible outrage against You of thinking that You were not kind enough to pardon.'

Finally, if the soul continued to be tormented by the thought of its own damnation, Claude allowed it to keep itself

in prayer and out of prayer, at the feet of Jesus Christ, as the most imperfect and most unfortunate of creatures, and as one who most deserved hell. But do not fail, however, to place all your confidence in Him. . . . You know well that He seeks those who offend Him, and that it is for

the sinner that He became man. Don't leave His adorable feet, clasp them so closely, that should He wish to cast you into hell, He would have to allow Himself to be drawn along with you.

Is it possible better to restore to balance a soul that is swaying with despair? The tone can vary according to circumstances. In order to adapt himself to the character of his correspondent, he turns to a touch of the familiar. But it is always the same doctrine, deeply human, fully divine. Who, for instance, at the approach of death, would not like to have received a letter such as this:

Well, then, my dear sister, we must think of heaven, and make a sacrifice of this miserable life to our good Master from whom we received it. Do you know what would help me to bestir my confidence, if I were as near to going to give an account to God as they tell me you are? It would be nothing more than the number and greatness of my sins. Here is a confidence really worthy of God, which far from allowing us to be depressed by the sight of our faults, strengthens us on the contrary in the infinite idea it has of the goodness of our Creator. The confidence which is inspired by innocence and purity of life does not give, it seems, a very great glory to God. For, is this, then, all that the mercy of our God can achieve, namely, to save a soul that has never offended Him? It is certain that of all confidences, that which honors the Lord most is that of a notorious sinner who is so convinced of the infinite mercy of God, that all his sins seem no more than an atom in the presence of this mercy. . . .

The same sentiments have been gathered from the writings of Thérèse of Lisieux, in a long passage which ends with these words: "I know that all that multitude of offenses would be swallowed up in the twinkling of an eye, like a drop of water in a burning furnace."

This confidence in God would not justify the least laxity. The casuist of the *Provincial Letters* would waste his time looking for support for such subterfuges in these letters. It is the second point raised by the writer of the *Preface* of 1715. "Directors," he writes, "will see that if sometimes we must regulate fervor in temperaments that are weak and delicate, especially in the matter of corporal austerities, there can be no permitting a division in the affections of the heart which God asks for, and which He deserves whole and entire."

Admirable indeed is the prudence of La Colombière. There is nothing outlandish or rude in his demands. "Are we going to promise God that in the future we shall go in search of the rudest crosses?" he asked one Friday of Lent at St. James. "No, my dear Christians, I know better than to give you such advice. That would be too much for you." But "if I cannot force my heart to love the cross, I will oblige it at least to love pleasure a little less. I will do without it often for the love of You, my God."² So little is required to waylay the soul. "A ribbon, a patch, a skirt, are sometimes the bonds which will hold it back."³

Claude is not one of those glum moralists "who wish to do away with all the brightness of life." "I wish that I could lead everybody to heaven over a path of roses. But as there is nothing of the kind, can I refrain from making known to the world the only road that can lead to heaven?"⁴

To point out that this renouncement is an essential condition of perfection, he does not disdain a touch of paradox.

'O the great illusion,' he writes to a Visitandine of Paray, 'and one which is nonetheless common, to imagine that one has little or much virtue, according as one has few or many distractions in prayer. I have known nuns who were raised to a high degree of contemplation, and who were distracted from the beginning right to the end of their prayer. . . . My dear sister, even though you were ravished in ecstasy twenty-four times a day, even though I had twenty-four distractions in reciting an Ave Maria, if I were as humble and as mortified as you, I would not wish to exchange my involuntary distractions for your ecstasies devoid of merit. In a word, I do not recognize perfection where there is no mortification. Do a perpetual violence to yourself, especially interiorly; never allow nature to be mistress, nor your heart to be attached to anything, no matter what. I will canonize you, and the only thing I will not ask you is how you made your prayer.'

"It is neither seclusion," he writes again, "nor long conversations with God that make for holiness, but the sacrifice of our will, even

² *Sixième méditation sur la Passion*, V, 73.

³ *Premier sermon pour la jour de Noël*, I, 123.

⁴ *Réflexions chrétiennes. Du Monde*, V, 142.

in the holiest of things, and an inseparable attachment to the will of God."

On this essential point, there is no difference between people of the world and religious. God's will. . . . To make sure that the mind does not escape into absurd and idle fancies, La Colombière made it discern that Will, even apart from positive laws, in everything that happens to us from morning to night:

All our life is sown, so to speak, with these tiny thorns which produce in our hearts a thousand involuntary movements of hatred, envy, fear, impatience, a thousand little fleeting disappointments, a thousand slight worries, a thousand disturbances, which for a moment at least alter our peace of soul. For example, a word escapes which should not have been spoken, or some one utters another that offends us; a servant is clumsy or slow in waiting on you; a child inconveniences you, a bore stops you, a heedless fellow jostles you, a horse bespatters you with mud; you don't like the weather, your work is not proceeding according to your plan; a piece of furniture is broken, a dress is stained or torn. I know that this is no occasion for practicing very heroic virtue, but I do say that this would be enough to acquire it without fail, if we really wished to.

But accepting these contradictions was not enough. Claude suggests that each one "offer himself to God every day to endure great misfortunes, according to His will."

If God wished to deprive you of this son or this husband; if He permitted you to lose this lawsuit, or this money which you have invested, you would have need of great strength to bear so harsh a blow. . . . Anticipate His orders, and from now on submit to all that He has resolved to do. . . . In the morning, think of the most unpleasant thing that could happen that day. It could happen that during the day you should hear of a shipwreck, of a bankruptcy, a fire. Perhaps before night, you might receive some signal affront, some terrible humiliation. Perhaps death will deprive you of the person you most love in the world. You don't know but you may die yourself, suddenly and even tragically. Accept all these misfortunes, should it please God to permit them; force your will to consent to this sacrifice, and do not give it any respite until you feel that it is disposed to wish or not to wish whatever God might wish or not wish.⁵

⁵ *De la soumission à la volonté de Dieu*, IV, 193 ff.

It is blameworthy to give oneself up to vexation because of embarrassing circumstances for which Providence is responsible.

Everything that comes from God ought to be accepted with humility, silence, meekness, spiritual joy, and complete tranquillity. You think that you would have fewer distractions if you did not have the business that God has laid upon you; and I think that you would have fewer if you took this business with greater conformity with God's will, and if you looked upon yourself in your occupations as a servant of Jesus Christ, who is employed where her Master thinks it good, and who is equally satisfied no matter what service is asked of her. Try to live in the condition in which you find yourself as though you would never leave it; and think rather of making a good use of your crosses than of getting rid of them under the pretext of being freer to serve God.

In spite of appearances, the will of God is more loving when it brings us suffering. More loving, because nothing is better suited to detach the soul from everything created. "Your letters always give me great joy, because they inform me that our Lord continues to share His cross with you, that is, His loves and His delights." Or again: "I have never been so satisfied with you as I have since you have been suffering. The continued repose which you had been enjoying before gave me a bit of worry." Or again, this word which so often slips from his pen: "Love grows on suffering; we find it everywhere." But that does not prevent the apostle from sympathizing, and with what delicacy of feeling! "I am carrying all your crosses with you, and I would gladly ask to carry them by myself, if I did not fear to do you wrong, and if I were not sure that these are the most precious jewels that you have received from Jesus Christ."

If, therefore, the priest demands a complete stripping of his penitents, it is because a heart thus disengaged will be lighter in its ascent to God. "Can one think of the love of creatures when one is thinking of the love of God?" This detachment, of which he is the first to give the example, far from making him rigid and harsh, inspires him with the most exquisite expression even for the love of family. He writes, for example, to his elder brother concerning Joseph, the youngest of the family, who had just entered the Society of St. Sulpice: "My brother writes me very rarely . . . but I do not

take it ill that he does. In the design he has of giving himself entirely to God, I am delighted to be the first whom he forgets." And further on: "Although I love you tenderly, I would be willing to be wiped out of your memory, if my place were given to Jesus Christ who alone deserves your affection."

"God alone" is a phrase which recurs like a refrain on many a page of his correspondence. To love God, not for the consolations with which He often favors those who are faithful to Him, but for Himself. "Your love ought to have God as its sole object, and in no sense His gifts or His graces."

Much less should one be attached to one's director. We recall the advice given to the Poor Clares of Lyons, on the occasion of a clothing. Claude often comes back to that. "Do not take it ill whether permission to write is given or refused. You will see that our Lord will supply for all, and that when you wish to be satisfied with Him alone, you will find more in Him than in all the rest of creation.

"And then, how much time is lost in conversations under the pretext of direction! These visits which never end, and which begin over again every day are a great pastime and a real illusion. With so many conversations one grows satisfied and dissipated, and meanwhile, one leaves God aside, with whom we must try to be united."

For the same reason the father finds fault with that concern which urges one to take up relations with all the pious people in a neighborhood. "I do not like these devotees who wish to know all the others. God should be enough for you, my dear daughter."

If the Jesuit's pen sometimes betrays a bit of temper, it is when he has read in a letter, "What a shame that you have left Paray!" "Do not speak to me any more, please, about the loss you have sustained in my going; it is too much to be sorry for a miserable man who, left to himself, was more capable of harming you than helping you." But if to regrets, one had the imprudence to add compliments, the answer was still more vivacious:

Don't speak any more of this departure, or of the pain it caused you; for it's a pain that I cannot approve. Your heart should not feel any other pain than that of having offended God. . . . It is not that I am not much

gratified by these signs of kindness that you give me; but as your interests are much dearer to me than any satisfaction of my own, I am afraid that in wishing to show me honor you are doing harm to yourself. We must belong to God without reserve, and must fear as death any movement of the heart that does not go straight to Him. What a misfortune it would be to waste tears for any other reason than to show Him your love, tears, I say, which are so precious, that one alone, with His grace, would put out in the other life all the flames which your sins have merited.

I won't say any more about this.

As his correspondent in a later letter added too many worldly "compliments" to her excuses, the director wishes aff end of it: "Do not send me any more compliments; and you bestow praise on me which is more displeasing still, because I have less right to it, and it might be bad for me."

Claude does not take any other tone with his Visitandine sister who, moreover is very dear to him.

You tell me that if I had the time to see you often, you would be much better than you are. Perhaps you have not fully reflected that in your solitude you have Him from whom comes every spiritual grace and without whose help no man could be of any aid to you, and who has no need of me or of any other to make you holy. Examine this point well, and don't make any answer to this thought, because you haven't any sound answer to make. All that prevents us from profiting from the presence of Jesus Christ is our lack of confidence, for He is not in our midst to remain idle. But so rarely do we have recourse to Him, and we go to Him with so little faith, that it is no wonder we have so little share in the treasures of light and the blessings which He communicates to those who address themselves to Him as to a Master and as the source of all perfection.

On another day he said the same thing: "Once God has become Master of a heart, He does not dwell there in idleness." This jealous thirst to allow God to act exclusively inspires Claude with expressions which the world would think improper or willfully harsh. When Mother de Saumaise ended her term as superior and had to leave Paray, he wrote to one of her daughters: "Your loss was indeed great, when you lost your good mother. However if your confidence

was in her, it is good for you that she went." To a young Jesuit who had amiably borne him company during a sharp seizure of illness in the spring of 1679, he sent this word of thanks:

You are doubtless waiting for me to give you some expression of the pain your leaving caused me. But no, my dear Father, I rejoice more every day at our separation. It was not easy for me to be detached from everything while you were here, and now I well understand that it was not God alone who made this visit sweet, while I had you as companion in my solitude. You are too enlightened not to perceive in that a just reason for my being glad. It is so great a blessing to have nothing other than God, and to be deprived of every pleasure which one can enjoy out of Him, that we should count among our gains every loss that leaves us in this state.

It is again this thought of the "all sufficiency" of God which inspired La Colombière with so much delicacy and discretion. The priest ought to limit himself to making the soul attentive and docile to the least movements of the Holy Spirit. "Expect all from God, and not from any creature, not even your directors. Whoever they may be, they can do nothing without our Lord, and He can do everything without them." If there is any danger of their impeding the work of God, it would be better to do without them for a time. "My thought on the need which you think you have of a director in your present condition? . . . No, Mademoiselle, you have no need. So much communication hurts rather, and serves no good purpose."

Of course, when a soul is scrupulous and cannot make up her mind, the father cuts short and makes the decision for her—it has to be done—and with considerable vigor!

Do not trouble yourself about your past life. All that you tell me on the matter of circumstances was not said for you. Do you think me so simple-minded as not to have known how to have you make a good confession when you were in danger of death? . . . Let it be enough for you that I left you in good shape, and don't ever again speak to me about this matter. I am willing to take all responsibility.⁶

Apart from such cases, he was prudently reserved. What modesty! What readiness to recognize his own mistakes, and even to exagger-

⁶ The word "idiot" did not then have the vulgar meaning of today, but meant simply "ignorant." Cf. *On Scruples*, VI, 431, 482, 613.

ate them! "I praise our Lord," he wrote to Mother de Saumaise, "that He has not permitted the applicant to make use of the imprudent advice I gave her." And another time: "I have reason to believe that I have been quite at fault, and that I was lacking in vigor on one occasion and in proper guidance on some others." Or this: "When P.N. . . . does not agree with me, it would be no sign that he was mistaken." He was told that someone in Paray was not satisfied with his letters. Instead of taking offense, he says:

I have no reason to answer her complaints, unless it be that they are only too well justified, and that she has a thousand reasons for being ill satisfied with me. I have so little tact, that I present the same exterior to all my friends, daily giving them reasons for being dissatisfied. . . . I am certain that this young lady would not complain if she did not have reason to. I know her virtue. I wish I had as much. I am not surprised that my last letter did her so little good. I am surprised that others did. But God makes use of everything to do good to those who love Him.

Placed at the beginning of the collection of 1715 is this note to the reader: "They will understand that genuine virtue and the most perfect sanctity consist in the perfect fulfillment, with the intention of pleasing God, of all the duties of their state, and in giving up all devotions of their choice, however holy they may otherwise be, as soon as they become incompatible with their essential duties."

"It would in fact be something beautiful in the world," notes La Colombière, "if each one performed the duties of his state. But that is what is most neglected, even by devout people, and sometimes by them more than others. And yet, they do not accuse themselves of that. 'You have mentioned the sins of Charles, not of the Emperor,' said his confessor to Charles V."

Family duties especially. There is nothing which recurs oftener in letters to persons in the world than the obligation to obey parents, to accept their decision in the use and sharing of belongings, in the matter of comportment, or the clothes to be worn, or visits to be made, and even slighter things: "Regarding the apron, do nothing that could displease your mother; see whether you can't dispose of it without annoying her." And not only with regard to one's parents: "The coldness which you show your sisters, and the reasons you give

for doing so, are equally unbearable, and not at all in the spirit of God." The following is even more severe:

I have no fear for you, except that the way you are acting towards your relatives may be lacking in humility, or charity, or meekness. But for that, I will answer for all the rest. . . . Try to live with your brothers and sisters-in-law as though they were your masters and mistresses and represented the person of Jesus Christ in your regard, as in fact they do, however they may do it. . . . Look upon yourself as very imperfect, until you come to that.

And to make sure that his directions do not remain a dead letter, he closes with this sharp command: "Show this paragraph to your sister." One cannot affirm more clearly that a spiritual person's duty "begins at home."

But he does not stop there. Elsewhere we have spoken of the keenness of vision and the forcefulness with which Claude taught the duties of charity and "Catholic Action." Here is a summons to one's civic duties which does not lack pungency. La Colombière, a loyal subject both of Christ and the king, answering a person who was bitterly complaining of a continual increase in taxes, as the result of unending wars, wrote:

In the name of our Lord, don't torment yourself so much about the poll tax. If I were in your place I would rather pay double than commit the least of the faults you commit with your murmuring. If our Lord asks your property of you through those who are vested with His authority, will you refuse Him? Doesn't everything belong to Him? Haven't you received everything from Him? Do you think that this is done without the special direction of His providence? Do all that you can to prevent injustice being done you, because our Lord wishes that also. But this should be done without being perturbed, and after you have done all in your power, give your money to the collector with as much joy as though Jesus Christ in person, before your very eyes, were asking you for it.

Would a casuist have settled the difficulty with so agile a pen? But, better than casuist, better even than moralist, Claude wished to give a direction for Christian perfection.

The duty of a Christian, far from ending in his family, demands sometimes, should the divine King issue a call, that he give it up. Claude does not hurry these privileged vocations, but studies them at leisure. As long as any obscurity lasts he holds them off. In spite of her desires Catherine de Bisefranc was firmly kept from the cloister right up to the end, and the father made her sister Marie wait a number of years. "If it is a cross to follow your mother in the visits she makes, that is all the better for you. I beg God with all my heart that the world will always be difficult for you. As long as it is it will never do you harm."

"You speak of entering at St. Clare," he wrote five months later. "But before giving you an answer I should like to know: (1) if this thought is pleasing to you, if you are glad when it comes to you, or if it unsettles you when it comes, or when it goes; (2) how you propose to carry out your plan; (3) where; (4) how you will manage it; (5) how your mother will take it; and whether you have the courage to leave all without saying goodbye, if need be. When you have answered these questions I will tell you what I think."

But when Christ's call makes itself heard clearly, the apostle, then a real father, encourages, urges. He pleads with parents and helps to cut the bonds. Madame de Lyonne, in the instance of her daughter, will, as we shall see, surrender.

Once consecrated to God in the religious life, how is the soul to reach the perfection of her state? Here, more than ever, La Colombière goes straight to essentials, that is, as the *Preface* of 1715 notes, by making such people understand that nothing is "more perfect for them than what is expressly pointed out for them in their rules or by the commands of their superiors."

Take it in good part, he writes to an Ursuline, that I encourage you to the perfect observance of your rules. It is in truth a source of blessings. For myself, I confess that mine are my sole treasure, and I find so many blessings hidden in them that I feel that if I were all alone on an island at the end of the world, I would dispense with everything else and ask for no other help, provided God gave me the grace to observe them well. O holy rules! Blessed is the soul that has known how to place you in his heart and recognize all the advantages you offer him!

"Believe me," he writes another day, "all our happiness is attached to the respect we have for the least observances. Free and easy people consider that restraint a torture. But there is a treasure attached to this strict fidelity, a certain fullness of sweetness, and when one does it with love, a kind of liberty a thousand times more pleasant than the false pleasures of the most disorderly persons."

This conviction furnished him with the occasion of a piquant pleasantry with regard to a Visitandine to whom he wrote: "I am delighted that you are so in love with your vocation. I don't know why you made the remark, but the best proof is that there is not a rule, not the least little regulation, that you do not wish to observe as exactly as your vows."

As to obedience, the director "made so much of it that the other virtues seemed nothing to him if they did not lead to it." "The strong desire I have to practice it has made all the happiness of my life . . . I would rather give up all kinds of mortifications, prayers, good works than withdraw in a single point, I do not say from the commands, but even from the wish of those who govern me, how faintly soever I may perceive that wish."

Once or twice La Colombière was faced with the critical and painful case of an order given in a way that he thought to be imprudent or blundering. What was he to do? His direction is no less firm. "A superior may govern ill, but it is impossible for God not to govern well through him." We know already how he tried to settle the difficulties which were prevalent among the Ursulines at Paray.

When he could, and if his relations with the incriminated superior allowed him to, he did not hesitate to correct her manner of acting; but he did this with the utmost delicacy. For example, in connection with an English lady shortly after she entered the Visitation at Charolles:

I strongly approve the apparent severity you are using towards her. It is not, according to my way of looking at things, that one should never change occasionally and in that imitate God Himself, who ordinarily mingles gentleness with severity and allows consolation to follow desolation, and then submits us later to fresh trials. This procedure is more adapted to

our weakness, and makes the trials more deeply felt and more profitable for us. But I have been wrong so often, that I am not sure that what I propose to you is in fact reasonable. I hope that our Lord who has placed these souls in your hands will give you the light to lead them as long as you ask it of Him, as you do, with humility and confidence.

Besides, when a superior had confided the direction of her soul to him, far from feeling awed by her title, Claude only found himself stirred the more to lead her with greater energy. It is impossible to forget his letters to the abbess of the Bénissons-Dieu, Madame Houel de Morainville, and to the superior of the Visitandines of Charolles, Mother Françoise de Thélis. Never in his letters to simple religious do we find, even remotely, such energetic accents, so demanding did God's goodness seem to the director in behalf of His representatives here below.

Prayer assuredly is one of the duties most recommended to religious by their rule. La Colombière frequently recurs to it. The method which he advised by preference, taken from the method he himself used, had none of that conventional rigidity which some have fancied as a caricature of the Ignatian method. From the advice which he gives even to people of the world, one can judge of that which he would counsel religious.

As to prayer, I am afraid that you will become too much attached to the point of your book. However, if you find good in it, don't change. Remember that every time you are filled with extraordinary sentiments, either of thanksgiving, or the love of God, or of admiration for His kindnesses, or of desire to please Him, or of contempt for the things of earth, or finally, of His presence, you should make them the subject of your prayers, and busy yourself in relishing these feelings and strengthening them.

Enjoy, prolong, increase the desire that God gives you of doing something for Him. Make that the subject of your prayer as often as you feel moved by these thoughts. Don't take any other, except when your heart is empty of all good thoughts. If it is always occupied with movements, now of admiration, now of desire, of shame, of sorrow, of submission, of contempt for the world, of love of God, of reverence for His presence, you will be able to do without books; and you will be right.

To someone who consulted him on introducing some variety into the subjects of meditation, he went so far as to say:

The subject of Magdalen is a good one, from one end of the year to the other, as long as you find some fruit in it. In general every subject which satisfies you, and in which you find relish and fruit, you would do well to stick to. You could change every day, and often even in the same meditation; and one could also remain with it throughout the whole of life.

In our relations with God more than with any other, the proverb is applicable, "we cannot have our cake and eat it." A nun who had become lax in her prayer wished to bind herself by vow to make her meditation, except on those days when she might be tired. But she was afraid that even with this exception understood, the vow would become a source of scruples for her. She had written pages and pages on the subject. The father answered, not without a touch of irony: "I will tell you, my dear sister, that I have read all your papers, and, after having studied them, I was surprised that you put yourself to such trouble in a matter in which you have taken so many precautions against committing yourself. I do not see that an obligation hedged about with so many conditions as this is could leave any doubt in conscience, since you are able to dispense yourself at will. . . ."

But a generous soul should not be content with strict obligations: "If you pray only when you are obliged, or because you have obliged yourself, you will never succeed in prayer, you will never love it, you will never be glad to converse familiarly with God . . . It is not vows or promises that ought to draw us to this holy exercise, but rather the happiness which a faithful soul finds in frequently drawing near to God."

From this example and from the letter to Mother de Thélis which we have already quoted, we see that La Colombière freely encouraged the practice of private vows, from which he had himself drawn so much profit. He wrote one day to Mlle. de Lyonne, who had just pronounced the three vows of religion: "O the sweet bonds, my dear sister, may they always be dear to us! O, if we could only bind ourselves to this lovable Jesus with a million bonds instead

of three!" These additional obligations "protect the soul and reassure it in the hours when it doubts of its own love for God, or of the love which God Himself has for us. The remembrance of the stricter chains with which He has asked us to bind ourselves to Him, and of the grace which He has given us to keep them, are for us a proof of this mutual love. God loves us since He has asked such a thing of us, and we love Him since we are willingly and joyfully bound."¹

Like all directors Claude found some of these people something of a burden, devotees who failed to make their devotion engaging. Catherine de Bisefranc seems to have been one of these—a bit simple, awkward enough, but filled with the desire of doing good. Her frail health obliged her from her early years to live on medicines. She was quite unfitted for marriage, and had given up all thought of it, and yet was not able to keep from dreaming a little of the married life of others. Proud of having a man of ability as her director, she could not help showing the letters she received from him. A busy-body, eager for advice on the slightest matters, she asked it of all and sundry. But once she received it she reproached herself endlessly for not having followed it, and returned no less endlessly to her director without ever boring him, to ask him to punish her for her unfailing infidelities. She was an inexhaustible questioner, and two letters of La Colombière give answers, one to twenty-seven questions, the other to thirty-five. Their printed text occupies no fewer than eleven octavo pages. And yet, naïvely indiscreet as she was, she found even these answers too short.

It is she who, having learned from her sister that in addressing letters to London, she should not give her director the title "Reverend Father," wrote quite simply, "My dear." This brought upon her the following answer:

As you beg me to tell you what I think of your letter, I will begin my answer with that. First, I do not think it proper for you to use this manner of speaking: 'My dear.' My dear Father, or My dear Sir would be tolerable, but 'My dear,' all by itself, as you said twice, should not be used by a young woman.

¹ Père Monier-Vinard, *Le Bienheureux Claude de la Colombière*, selected pages, *Maîtres spirituels*, p. 160.

One day, thinking that she noticed a special taste in the host which she received in communion, Catherine consulted him. Uneasy doubtless of this interpretation of the *omne delectamentum*, Claude hastened to calm her exaltation forcefully but without rebuking her:

The taste in the sacred host is either from God or from your own imagination which is deceiving you. I do not know what to say about it, except that it ought to be quite humiliating, however you explain it. For, if it is from God, He is treating you in a way which shows that you are still not very spiritual, since He judges that to draw you, you have to have pleasures that flatter your senses. Well and good! Whatever the explanation, it isn't worth your while to be troubled about it. We might say that it is neither good nor bad, and that the best thing you could do is to pay no attention to it.

On reading these eighteen letters to Catherine de Bisefranc, which fill no fewer than fifty-nine large pages, it is difficult to repress a feeling of impatience with the penitent's indiscretion, and we wonder at the infinite patience of the director. But how can we fail to admire even more this infinite respect for souls who, in spite of little oddities, are sincerely tending to perfection?

Claude did not have to fear any such importunities from Mlle. de Lyonne, of whom we speak elsewhere, or from Mother de Saumaise. Naturally the intermediary, and sometimes chosen by Christ, between Margaret Mary and La Colombière, Mother de Saumaise had early won his entire confidence, especially by the forcefulness and wisdom of her guidance. Speaking of the correspondence, a Visitandine declares: "I do not know what most to admire in these letters, the deep humility of this great religious or the esteem and absolute confidence he had in this mother, accepting her advice and giving her an account of all his adventures, which were numerous, all the time he was in that unfaithful country."

In making known something of the apostolate in London, we have drawn largely from this correspondence. Of the letters in which La Colombière "took the advice" of the superior, we have, besides those which concern Sister Alacoque, some pages in which the father asks advice on extraordinary vocations. For example

that of "a young widow of middling health, but of much spirit and courage, and without possessions," who is "eager now for almost a year to retire apart to some solitude, to live a life of penance." We should not be surprised if there were others, in which the circumstances were more intimate and personal. Great theologians sought light from St. Teresa, and even popes listened to the counsels of St. Catherine of Siena. We suppose, however, that in the letters she handed over Mother de Saumaise suppressed details that were too much to her praise. Here and there only a few words survive which throw some light on what may have been the confidences exchanged between these chosen souls:

I take a greater share than I can tell you in the extraordinary favor which you have received from our Lord; and I thank Him from the depth of my soul, as though it was to me the favor had been granted. I have already said some Masses in thanksgiving, and I will say Mass again today for that intention. I congratulate you also on the cross He has been pleased to send you.

A few days later:

I do not know how to express the thanks I feel for all the blessings God has given me through you. You would have me, most dear Mother, exhort you more than I do to draw greater profit from the graces which you receive. *They have a very close relation with my own.* But I would be in despair if you did not respond to them better than I do.

And once again: "A thousand, thousand thanks for the good advice you give me for body and soul. Continue, my dear Mother, to remind me from time to time of what it is so important for me not to forget, and which nonetheless I forget so easily. I take that as I should, you need have no worry."

In bringing to a close his funeral oration on Queen Maria Theresa, Bossuet invited his hearers to tremble when they thought of the terrible account they would have to give on the last day, when they appear before Jesus Christ, "deceived by our pleasures, by our play, by our health, by our youth, by the happy success of our affairs, by our flatterers, among whom we must count the unfaithful directors who we have chosen to mislead us."

From all that we have just now read on Father La Colombière, it is only too clear that the just reprobation of the great bishop, leveled against the guides who are false to their sheep, cannot even touch him. They who were directed by him, when they appear before God, will have nothing but praise for his warnings, even—and perhaps especially—for those which at first sight might have seemed a little harsh.

But we are in London, September of 1678. The most hypocritical of the antipapal conspiracies which the history of the seventeenth century records had already begun to rumble. Caught in the storm by the calumnious denunciation of some of his protégés, Claude will do better than teach a joyous submission to the good will of God. The “faithful servant and perfect friend” of Christ is going to preach by example.

27

The Papist “Terror,” 1678

IN OCTOBER, 1678, the Duchess of York went to Holland to be with her stepdaughter Mary, princess of Orange, who was expecting her first child. On her return to London, she was shocked by the confusion that had been brought about there in less than two weeks.

To her dear *fratello* at Modena she writes, November 3rd: “There are so many intrigues going on here, and so many alleged conspiracies that I couldn’t write you the hundredth part. . . . I limit myself to saying that matters are going very badly for the Catholics.” She reaffirms her fears in successive letters. On November 24th: “Every day new stories are invented and new conspiracies, too long and too confused to be recounted. Besides, why write, when all the couriers are arrested and all letters opened? Catholics are banished from London, and many poor people die of hunger and misery.” On December 8th: “We have never heard such stories. Even the queen

herself is accused!" Finally, eight days later: "The worst is that some of these unfortunate people, forced by necessity, give up our holy faith, a deplorable thing! . . . As to myself, I have had to dismiss all my Catholic servants, to my great sorrow, parliament having forbidden them all approach to the court."

Thus Mary Beatrice declared herself incapable of describing the "national outbreak of hysteria," which had just taken place, "an outbreak," declares a recent biographer of Charles II, "which will probably ever retain the name of 'Popish Plot,' but which should more properly be called the Popish 'Terror,' a chapter in our history of which we can still be ashamed. And assuredly it is one which all apologists for Charles II would willingly forget."¹ "An imposture," writes John Lingard, "which, brought forward in a time of popular discontent and supported by the arts and declamation of a numerous party, goaded the passions of men to a state of madness, and seemed for a while to extinguish the native good sense and humanity of the English character."² "A frenzied carrying away of the people," declared David Hume earlier still, "another example of which it would be difficult to find in all history."³

Such violence remains an enigma, unless we recall the state of mind prevailing in England at the time. "In the first place," says Macaulay, "her national pride was wounded." During the seven years of continental war which had just come to an end in the preceding August by the treaty of Nimeguen, she had remained practically inactive in spite of some passing starts and as a consequence of the contradictory manoeuvres of Charles II. "Yet she had, in consequence of the imbecility and meanness of her rulers, sunk so low, that any German or Italian principality which brought five thousand men into the field, was a more important member of the commonwealth of nations."⁴ Thus, "the treasure of popularity" which had supported the beginning of this reign was exhausted. The

¹ Osmund Airy, *Charles II*, 1904, p. 330.

² *History of England*, IV, c. v.

³ *Histoire de la Maison de Stuart*, edit. 1760, III, c. v. 240. For this and other references to the *Histoire de la Maison de Stuart*, see also Hume's original work in English, *The History of Great Britain under the House of Stuart*, Vol. II, pp. 275 and following. [Translator]

⁴ *History of England from the Accession of James II*, chap. ii.

nation had lost faith in her sovereign. Indulgent to the scandals of his private life, public opinion secretly—and sometimes violently in the pamphlets of the day—condemned the foreign policy of Charles and his effacement before France. *Europe Slave if England Does Not Break Her Chains*, is the title of one of the numerous pamphlets which at this time stigmatized the ambition of Louis XIV. And parliament meant nothing else when in its address to Charles II, March, 1678, it affirmed that its purpose was “to reduce the French king to such a condition that he would no longer be a source of fear to the subjects of your Majesty, but that Christendom would be established in such a peace that the said king would never be able to disturb it.”

Only on one point were the Commons agreed, without knowing it, with the king of France,—to refuse Charles II a strong army. Louis XIV refused it for fear of seeing it employed in the support of Holland; the House, for fear that Charles would use it to increase his own personal power.

With the bitterness of the national humiliation was mingled in the hearts of his subjects a lively anxiety for their civil liberties and constitutional rights. The French ambassador, Barillon, who was well acquainted with the indolence of the English king, wrote in vain: “At heart, he would much prefer to have peace place him in a state of rest . . . and I do not think that he is much concerned about being more absolute than he is.” Parliament had no less suspicion that its king was aspiring in secret for a monarchy like that of Versailles, a project which he could not bring to reality, as is clear, without the support of France. Hence, these specters of treason were filling men’s minds with panic.

And this all the more, as many were already aware that Louis XIV was openly supporting Charles under the form of substantial annuities. Ralph Montague, England’s ambassador at Paris, betraying at one and the same time his minister and his king, produced a letter in the House in which Charles II, at the beginning of 1678, had consented to sell his good offices to France for the sum of “six million livres, which he was to receive in the course of three years.” At the end of the document, which was drawn up by Danby, were the words: “This letter is written by my command, Charles, King.”

When Montague produced this paper it was greeted with amazement and a loud uproar.⁵

Many pretended to find in the desire for the restoration of Catholicism the one possible explanation for such an effacement. Even before the revocation of the Edict of Nantes, had not Louis XIV appeared as the persecutor of the reformed churches? Doubtless certain clauses of the secret *Treaty of Dover* had been noised abroad. Thus, foreign policy depended on religious policy! The unforgivable sin; for the hatred of Rome at the time constituted the predominant passion of the gentry, and it was as violent among the ignorant and the profane as among the most fanatic Protestants. "The cruelties of Mary's reign, which were neither accurately nor soberly related in the popular martyrologies, the conspiracies against Elizabeth, and above all, the Gunpowder Plot, had left in the minds of the vulgar a deep and bitter feeling which was kept up by annual commemorations, prayers, bonfires, and processions." We should not forget, adds Macaulay, "that those classes which were peculiarly distinguished by attachment to the throne, the clergy and the landed gentry, had peculiar reasons for regarding the Church of Rome with aversion. The clergy trembled for their benefices; the landed gentry for their abbeys and great tithes." What would happen if the Duke of York, a fervent Catholic, succeeded his brother? Charles having no legitimate son, James would normally succeed him . . . unless something intervened to prevent this catastrophe. Hundreds of people were ready, watching for this event, preparing it perhaps, and eager to make the most of it when it did come to pass. Among these were two pretenders to the throne, the eldest of the king's bastards, the Duke of Monmouth, and William of Orange, who by his marriage a year earlier had become the nephew of Charles II. It was in this troubled and overcharged atmosphere that the news of the *Popish Plot* broke like a clap of thunder, and to which the Duchess of York had alluded.

Titus Oates was the son of a Baptist minister. A pastor himself for a time in the Anglican church, he was deprived of his benefice

⁵ The scene is described by Hume in his *Histoire de la Maison de Stuart*, III, chap. v, 244.

for the crime of perjury; then chaplain on a ship, this infamous person, "the most infamous of all men," according to David Hume, "was driven out for moral excesses which one does not dare to mention." "Ever since," Macaulay honestly admits, "he led an infamous and vagrant life." On the advice of Ezechiel Tonge, a "theologian," according to Burnet, "of the most worthless kind, a mind credulous to the point of stupidity," Oates feigned conversion to Catholicism, with the purpose of worming his way into the lives of those who, according to his own admission, he "intended to betray." Sent to Spain, to the English College at Valladolid, he was driven from there, but by dint of supplication got a second trial in the college of St. Omer. A subtle hypocrite, he was able for almost eight months to restrain his lower instincts. He admitted his mistakes, and every time he was caught in one, swore to amend. He had but the one aim, to give himself time to observe, to gather some names, some details, which he could later put to good use. It was thus he learned that on the occasion of the triennial meeting usual in each of their provinces, the Jesuits had gathered in London, at the end of April, 1678.

An Englishman passing through St. Omer took one look at him and cried: "What monster is the Society nourishing in her bosom!" He was merely quoting the remark of St. Gregory Nazianzen about Julian the Apostate. At last, one fine day, the fathers came to understand that they were wasting their time "trying to whitewash a blackamoor!" It was no use for the wretch to weep, to cringe, to cry in his despair: "I know that I must be a Jesuit or a Judas." But he had reached his limit. The sentence of expulsion was relentless. When night came they found him in the chapel, his elbows on the altar, facing the tabernacle. "What are you doing here?" "I am saying goodbye to Jesus Christ," he answered. It was not the farewell of a friend.

In the beginning of July, 1678, Titus Oates returned to London, and resumed contact with Dr. Tonge and some fellow-plotters whose part it was to get the great affair started.⁶

⁶ For this whole story we prefer the account given by the more recent biographer of Charles II, Arthur Bryant, without neglecting the authors already

On August 12th, a workman whose services Charles II made use of in his researches in alchemy, mysteriously approached him while he was strolling in the park: "Sire, beware, your life is in danger!" When questioned, he said that two men, Grave and Pickering, had sworn to kill the king. If they failed, Sir Wakeman, the queen's physician, was to poison him. "This information came to me from Dr. Tonge." When Tonge was summoned he handed over papers which contained the plans of a conspiracy in forty-three articles. "These writings," he declared, "are not in my hand. They were secretly slipped under my door. But I suspect who the author is." Charles, who had no taste for reading such trash, entrusted his enquiry to the lord treasurer, Danby.

On August 17th Tonge brought a fresh report, confirming the first and adding further details. "This time I have discovered the author. But he must remain unknown, as he fears assassination by the papists." Charles shrugged his shoulders and made fun of Danby's credulity. The latter proposed submitting the matter to the Privy Council. "No, no!" cried the king, "not even to my brother. This would sound an alarm, and give someone who perhaps was not thinking of it at all the notion to kill me."

Tonge, however, insisted. Towards the end of the month he told Danby: "I know that tonight a package of suspicious letters is to be posted from Windsor for the confessor of the Duke of York, Father Bedingfield." An order was given to intercept them. But the order arrived too late, and Bedingfield received his mail as usual.⁷ He opened it, and to his amazement, saw the names of the signers. But this was not their handwriting, much less their spelling. Everywhere there were the grossest blunders. Stranger still were the contents of the letters. He was informed that "matters are going well in Ireland. . . . And a beginning is being made in Scotland.

quoted: Hume, Lingard (very detailed), Macaulay, Airy, Pollock, but checking them with testimonies of contemporaries, sometimes unpublished, such as Barillon, Ronchi, and the English Jesuits in their *Annual Letters*.

⁷ This episode of the forged letters is recounted by several writers, especially Ronchi, chaplain to the Duchess of York, in a dispatch of October 13, 1678, preserved in the archives of Modena.

. . . Everything ought to be in movement at once, and by all means get Number Forty-eight out of the way (later Oates said that this number designated Charles II), but without the knowledge of the Duke of York. . . ." Bedingfield suspected the trap, and immediately laid the whole thing before the duke, who at once brought it to the king with the request that he get to the bottom of the intrigues. "It's a good while," said Charles, "since they told me about this 'conspiracy.' But, would to God I had no other enemies than the Jesuits," and passed it off with a laugh.

The Duke of York did not laugh, but, suspecting a plot of quite a different kind, asked that it be laid before the Royal Council. Oates was exultant. At last they were beginning to pay some attention to his outlandish calumnies! They did, then, have some appearance of truth, but as he had more confidence in the populace than in the king's ministers, he determined on September 6th, to make sure that his denunciation was not hushed up, to appear with two of his accomplices and repeat it with even more embellishment before the justice of the peace, Sir Edmund Berry Godfrey. It was a false step, for this judge was loyal, and counted Coleman, secretary to the Duke of York, among his friends. Godfrey warned Coleman by letter that he was personally implicated in the accusation . . . and that he should watch his step.

Thus did Titus Oates rise out of the shadows. Summoned before the Council three weeks later, he brazened it out, and sold them a bill of what Macaulay calls "a hideous romance, resembling rather the dream of a sick man than any transaction which ever took place in the real world."

"The Pope," he said, "because of the heresy of Charles and his people, claimed sovereignty over England, and had delegated his powers to the Jesuits. Consequently, Father Oliva, general of the Order, had by letters patent under the seal of the Society appointed Catholic gentlemen to the highest posts in the army and the state." Oates revealed the names of the chancellor, the lord treasurer, the keeper of the privy seal, the secretary of state (Coleman), the procurator and lieutenant general, the general of the army Lord Bellasis,

who because of his corpulence was incapable of mounting a horse. There was a similar plan for the principal church offices, and a number of these dignitaries were foreigners, especially Spaniards.

The provincial of the English Jesuits had held a council, at which the king (whom they called the *Black Bastard*) was deposed as a heretic and condemned to death. A group which numbered no less than fifty Jesuits had met in May, at the sign of the *White Horse*, and had confirmed this resolution. Father Le Shee (the name the informer gave to de la Chaize) had sent ten thousand pounds sterling to London to meet the expenses of the attempt. A Spanish provincial had acted with like generosity. The prior of the Benedictines would give six thousand pounds. The Dominicans approved the plan, but sheltered themselves behind their poverty. Every means of assassination had been foreseen. Poison, by Sir Wakeman, the queen's physician; the dagger, by four Irish brigands; a pistol, loaded with silver bullets, by Grave and Pickering, the latter receiving thirty thousand Masses as advance salary. One had even laid a wager of a hundred pounds that Charles II would be in no condition to enjoy his Christmas cookies.

The king was not the only one threatened. The Jesuits who had used seven hundred bullets in the first burning of London, and had picked up in the plunder fourteen thousand pounds sterling, planned to start over again and burn all the large cities of the kingdom. The plans had been agreed upon in detail, and even various steps foreseen, according to the possible changes in the direction of the wind. They had moreover decided on uprisings in all three kingdoms. Coleman had sent two hundred thousand pounds to Ireland to support the rebellion; the king of France was to land large numbers of troops there, and the massacre of Protestants would be general. Well known controversialists, zealous opponents of popery were particularly in mind. (Burnet assures us that Oates did him this honor). After all these conflagrations and murders, the crown would be offered to the Duke of York on condition that he accept it as a gift from the pope and confirm all the appointments made by Rome, pardon the criminals and consent to the extirpation of Protestantism, root and branch. Otherwise he himself would in turn be punished.

While Titus Oates told his strange story, "the Council," writes Arthur Bryant, "sat amazed," as it listened to this "strange creature,

with neckless head and mouth set flat in the centre of the circle of his low brow and vast chin.”⁸ They were not, however, impressed by so much self-assurance. The man, claiming that in Spain he had seen Don Juan for long periods, and that he had promised powerful help to carry out the plot, Charles II asked him: “How is this Don Juan set up?” “A tall man, thin and very dark,” Oates answered. “You have never seen him,” rejoined the king. “He is short, stout and blond.” “As to the Jesuits of Paris, where have you dealt with them?” “In their house on the river bank.” “Of the three Jesuit houses in Paris,” put in Charles, “not one is on the river bank.” And he concluded: “He is the most arrant and knavish liar of them all!”

But the king was no longer master, and occult forces were on the watch. The informer obtained a company of soldiers, and as soon as night fell, September 28th, he placed three Jesuits under arrest. The next day before dawn, two others, who had taken refuge with the Spanish ambassador, were dragged from their beds and roughly handled, one of whom, the English provincial, Father Whitbread, was seriously ill. They were already being led away when the ambassador protested this violation of the right of asylum, and threatened reprisals. Then, Oates, without letting go of the papers and catalogues he had seized, pointing to Whitbread, who seemed to be on the point of expiring, said: “Let’s get out of here. Here’s a man who is fast on his way to the devil.” Hatred is inventive. A few days later the rumor was abroad that the provincial had been poisoned so as to escape torture and thus avoid all danger of betraying the names of his accomplices.⁹

Very soon there were other arrests, even outside of London. Religious and laymen were seized, among whom was Edward Coleman and the physician, Dr. Wakeman. Danby had recommended that the papers especially of Coleman be seized.

“By October 5th informations were coming in from every quarter,

⁸ Arthur Bryant, *op. cit.*, 270.

⁹ In fact, Father Whitbread did not die. Having recovered, he was cited before a commission of enquiry three months later. He was prosecuted for the sole crime of being provincial of the Jesuits, incarcerated, and finally hanged at Tyburn, with four of his brethren, June 20, 1679.

and the outlines of the plot were already, by some mysterious means, familiar to the whole kingdom." ¹⁰ But each one's fancy getting free rein, the accusations became so contradictory that the public came to look upon them as did the king, shrugged its shoulders and said that the plot was no more than a myth.

At this time the contents of certain letters which had been found on Coleman began to be noised abroad. "The pope," he had written to the Internuncio at Brussels, "never had so favorable an occasion of enriching his family and increasing the number of his friends. If he allowed it to escape, he would never find another like it." ¹¹ And to Father de la Chaize, the following year: "We have undertaken a great work; and it is nothing less than the conversion of the three kingdoms. . . . God has given us a prince who has become, I might say by a miracle, very zealous to further this glorious plan. . . ." In truth this great work, or this great plan was nothing more, as we have definitely stated, than the abolition of Protestantism as the state religion, and permission for Catholicism to flourish once more in the light of day; in a word, freedom of conscience. Coleman had simply made the mistake of mingling with his plan political demands such as this: "It would be good if His Most Christian Majesty made some financial offer to His Britannic Majesty in order to persuade him to dissolve parliament." ¹² How can we believe that a man is plotting the death of a sovereign, when on the contrary, he proclaims his concurrence indispensable, and declares without shame: "Money is the only means of enlisting the king in the interests of the Duke of York and of freeing him of the necessity of appealing

¹⁰ Arthur Bryant, *op. cit.*, 271.

¹¹ Letter of November 4, 1674, quoted like the following by Hume, *op. cit.*, 504 ff.

¹² June 29, 1674. This letter, longer than a folio page, like another of September 1674 of equal length, was produced in the trial as "addressed to Father de la Chaize." But this religious did not become confessor to Louis XIV until February, 1675, and before that had no connection with Versailles. These errors prove that in the whole affair, and when it was a question of compromising anyone, the judges "did not look very closely." Hume, who quotes the letters, said with reason: "We can judge what was the strength of this argument" (p. 501). This ought to put us on our guard against trusting the correctness of many other details.

to Parliament. . . . I am quite certain that money will not fail to persuade him, for there is nothing which money will not make him do even when it would be as much against his interests as what we are trying to persuade him is in favor of them."

Only, these passages if they were known to certain leaders in parliament who must have made use of them against Charles II, were evidently not passed on to the populace. Furthermore, the nation was not in a mind to give their natural meaning to the letters of a papist. The great work taken up by Coleman clearly appeared to be the horrible plot denounced by Oates.

It was in vain that the ambassadors of France and Spain took steps to ask for justice in the accusations preferred against Don Juan and the confessors of their kings. Barillon "even offered his own head in place of that of Father de la Chaize if even a shadow of truth were found in the lies of the informer." Charles declared that his lies were too silly to be taken seriously and "fell to laughing."

Louis XIV was of the same opinion. The charges brought against the Catholics seemed to him to be so baseless that he could not suppose that they would receive any credit from English public opinion. In a long letter to Barillon of October 21st, he declares that this "alleged conspiracy is nothing but a trick of the Lord Treasurer, Danby, to provide himself with a motive for keeping troops under arms, apparently as a defense against the papists, but in reality to renew hostilities in the Low Countries against France.

Meanwhile, a tragic occurrence was to permit the real conspirators to start their calumnies again. On October 17th the body of Edmund Berry Godfrey was found in a ditch on Primrose Hill. Although he was a well known Protestant, he had been imprudent enough to compromise himself with Coleman. . . . His death was a mystery, probably suicide, completed by a semblance of being strangled. But as Godfrey was a scrupulously upright judge, and as he had in his possession all the testimony of Titus Oates on the plot, it was easy to pass him off as a victim of the papists. Pamphlets, engravings, even medals were widely distributed to give some credit to the rumor. One of them represented a Jesuit in the act of killing Godfrey, while the pope applauded, the exergue carrying the phrase: *Tantum*

religio potuit suadere malorum, and on the reverse, *Moriendo restituit rem*.¹³

Was not this assassination the prologue of the tragedy foretold by Oates? People thought so. To whip passions to a fury the corpse was exposed in public for several days. The funeral which had been deferred until the 31st of October, became an irritating spectacle which stretched the nerves of the people to the breaking point. Seventy-two ecclesiastics walked before the body, and to preach the funeral sermon the rector of St. Martin's appeared in the pulpit flanked on either side by two huge guards to protect him in the event of an attack by hired murderers.

From then on terror reigned. "The wildest rumors spread like fire: of cellars full of cutlasses, of French legions sailing Kentwards, and papist armies marching under ground. A massacre was universally expected. Lady Shaftesbury, duly instructed by her lord, never walked abroad without a loaded pistol in her muff, and everywhere terrified ladies followed her example. Everything that was reported about the papists was immediately believed, regardless of probability, even to the story that a troop of monks had arrived from Jerusalem expressly to sing the *Te Deum* for the success of the plot." The mob breathed nothing but vengeance. "Anyone who bore the slightest resemblance to a priest was hustled to jail to await trial for his life; anyone with a cock-and-bull tale of a plot was believed and rewarded."¹⁴ The announcement that two thousand suspects crammed the London jails added to the fear. Chains had to be stretched across streets, barricades raised; the army and the militia, to the number of forty or fifty thousand men were on patrol often through the night. At the palace, the guard was doubled, and field batteries drawn up to defend it. The gates of the city were kept shut. "Indispensable precautions," eloquently cried Sir Thomas Player, "without which all the citizens would on the morrow have run the risk of *waking up to find their throats cut*."¹⁵

¹³ *Sic* Evelyn, in his *Journal*, under date of October 1, 1678. See also Hugh Ross Williamson's *Historicals Whodunits*, p. 195 ff. [Transl.]

¹⁴ Arthur Bryant, *loc. cit.*

¹⁵ Reported by Hume, *loc. cit.*, 233.

Every day before the Lords and the Commons, Oates swelled a little more with vanity and insolence. His least words became law. His accusation was worth a warrant for immediate arrest. Everybody held him to be the "savior of the nation." And old stone which had been found at *Oatlands* bearing this inscription, "We shall see oats preserve this land from destruction," appeared to be a proof of his sublime mission. "To the people," says Arthur Bryant, "this arrant scoundrel had become a kind of male Joan of Arc." At the urgent request of parliament, he was given apartments at Whitehall, where he could the better secure the life of his sovereign, a pension of twelve hundred pounds per annum, and an armed bodyguard. He was sometimes present even at the king's dinner.

The trade of the informer had become lucrative. A wretch named Carstairs entered the lists. For a long time he had earned a livelihood in Scotland by going disguised to conventicles and then informing against the preachers. Bedloe, a well known swindler, followed. He was an old stableboy of Lord Bellasis, a specialist in theft and betrayal wherever he had served, a being more repugnant than Oates, declared Hume; "a noted swindler," confirms Macaulay, condemned to death for contumacy in Normandy. "And soon from all the brothels, gambling dens, and sponging houses of London, false witnesses poured forth to swear away the lives of Roman Catholics." One came with a story of an army of thirty thousand who were to muster in the disguise of pilgrims at Corunna, and sail thence to Wales. Another had been promised canonization and five hundred pounds to murder the king. A third had stepped into an eating house in Covent Garden, and had there heard a great Roman Catholic banker, Marsellais by birth, and half drunk, shout, while waving his hand: "Here is what is ready to kill *him*." A dispute arose to determine whether he said "him" or "them." The crimes of Bedloe were forgotten, pardoned, and he was given a state apartment and a pension.

Charles II did not believe a word of all these tales. However, under pressure from parliament, he had consented to the five lords who had been denounced by Oates being confined to the Tower, October 25th. Harassed by shouts and threats, he again consented to seeing

all of the peers who did not take the oath of allegiance deprived of their hereditary seats in the House of Lords, November 20th. He asked for and got the voluntary retirement of the Duke of York from the Privy Council. And by a humiliation which seemed frightfully hard to the two brothers, the Commons preserved for James the right of succession, November 30th, by a majority of but two votes. Each time the king signed "with death in his soul," but he signed. "He knew that Oates was in daily conclave with the agents of the great lords and politicians who, from their Green Ribbon Club at the Knight's Head Tavern, controlled the city, and already guessed the course the tempest must take. If he set himself to discredit the plot openly, far from succeeding, he would be drawn into open conflict with the whole mass of his people, and so fall into the hands of his enemies." ¹⁶

Charles, however, had his moments of decency. He refused to dismiss from his pay several humble Catholic officers who had long served their country. When the Commons, on discovering this, summarily condemned to the Tower the secretary of state [Williamson], who had signed their pay warrant, the king informed them that he would be more civil to them than they had been to him; "for though they had put one of his servants in the Tower without acquainting him, he would now let them know that he proposed to let him out again."

Again, when at the end of November, the Houses presented a bill for his signature, which placed the militia under the authority of parliament, he recalled that a similar measure precipitated the civil war in 1642. For the first time in his reign he used his right of veto and declared point blank that he would not allow this command to pass from his hand even for a half-hour.

Meanwhile, fearing to be surpassed in infamy by his fellow knaves, Oates added spice to his accusations. He had already tried to implicate the Duchess de Mazarin in the plot. But this was not quite enough. Thinking that he would give the king an occasion for a divorce and by a new marriage obtain an heir, he accused the queen of having been privy to a scheme of her physician, Wakeman, to

¹⁶ Arthur Bryant, *loc. cit.*

poison her husband. He had the temerity to stand up in the full Council and say that he had accompanied some Jesuits to Somerset House, and there heard Catherine sob through her tears: "I cannot any longer suffer such affronts to my couch. Would that I could contribute by his death to the spread of the Catholic faith." The following Thursday, the scoundrel, rising up at the bar of the House of Commons, lifted his voice with the cry: "I, Titus Oates, accuse Catherine, Queen of England, of high treason!" According to the law, the testimony of a single witness had no weight, and so Bedloe appeared at the same time to support the odious calumny. Recounting these horrors to Louis XIV, Barillon added: "An hour later the king had Oates arrested, but somehow or other the matter will be taken in hand by the people and the Cabal." And two weeks later: "The king of England speaks of the two accusers in a manner that would lead one to believe that if he were really master their calumny would soon receive an exemplary punishment. But the Commons do not regard them in the same light."

In fact, no one could do anything against the informers. The most monstrous of their fables agreed so well with the popular terror, that the mass could not be prevented from believing every word and from looking upon all as traitors who did not take action in consequence. Besides, just as in our wildest dreams, so even in the delirium of these possessed men there was some glimmer of reason. Their worst impostures sometimes implied some shred of truth and nearly always of probability. What was more natural than that a king afflicted with a childless wife should wish to have power to dismiss her? What was more normal than that the Catholics should wish that one of their own, as perfect an Englishman as the Duke of York, should ascend the throne? There was no doubt either that the Jesuits had held their triennial congregation in London the previous April. Bedloe lied brazenly that there were at the meeting "one hundred and sixty secular priests, eighty Jesuits, and that one list he had seen contained more than three hundred names." And yet, this meeting took place in the very Palace of St. James. The Duke of York later told John Reresby: "It was lucky that Oates was not better informed; for then he would have fetched me a stout blow!"

Everyone, surely did not give credence to such nonsense. But "those who were not frightened by the sham plot," remarks Arthur Bryant, "could be terrorized by the real one: the scowling Oates, from whose presence honest men drew back as 'from a stench from hell,' had only to growl his famous threat, 'You're a Yorkist, I'll remember you for it,' for opposition to crumble away. For behind that bloodstained and accusing finger lay the powers of parliament, packed juries, and frightened judges, and the howling mob."¹⁷

We are surprised, however, that these disreputable informers, in spite of the court and the great majority of the Privy Council, in spite of numerous very honorable members of both Houses, could not only enjoy immunity, but even redouble their calumnies with such impudence. How could these worthless men, without education, without political experience, know how properly to correct, sometimes even to contradict previous statements, to add others more shameless still, but always just what the collective hysteria of the populace at that very moment could absorb? History has unveiled this mystery. Under these mad hallucinations there was concealed a cold and unscrupulous intelligence, which managed the play, and of which Oates, Tonge, Bedloe, and their partners were only the performers; an intelligence which was at the same time a power, capable of guaranteeing the life and liberty of the scoundrels who deserved a hundred hangings; aristocratic, with white hands, but bloodier than those of Macbeth; and criminal, more cannily malevolent than those whom he directed; perfectly ready, moreover, if he ever perceived that his puppets had exhausted their powers of persuasion, to abandon them like dastards. This man was Ashley Cooper, Earl of Shaftesbury. John Dalrymple, in the eighteenth century, was of the opinion even that Shaftesbury not only made use of the plot but that out of revenge against the king and the Duke of York, he had "invented it, although the informers had gone farther than he had at first told them."¹⁸ Macaulay, who joins Buckingham with Shaftesbury, thinks that "the murder of an innocent man weighed no more on their blighted conscience than the death of the

¹⁷ *Op. cit.*, 278.

¹⁸ *Memoirs of Great Britain and Ireland* (1771), I, 42.

game they killed in the hunt." More recently, Mr. Malcolm Hay, who has thrown light on a number of obscure points in the *Popish Plot*, is not afraid to call Shaftesbury "the most unscrupulous politician of the seventeenth century, the foster-father of the Oates Plot, a man without religion himself, and who was the chief patron of all the fanatics and one of the most destructive enemies of the faith that England has known."¹⁹

Coleman's blood was the first to flow. The mysterious turn of a part of his correspondence, and the cipher which he saw fit to send to Father de la Chaize, merely to give himself an air of importance, was enough to make him suspect. But to prove that his letters concealed no dark design, he willingly handed over the cipher to the commissioners who came to Newgate November 4th to question him. He certainly had relations with the last three French ambassadors, from the time of de Ruigny, and had accepted money from Courtin and Barillon, either for himself or for others, in particular "to be able to maintain a decent table, at which ten or twelve members of the House of Commons were always to be found." He had not concealed these money transactions from the examining magistrates. And although after an order from parliament he had not held the office of secretary in the Palace of St. James for many months, he still had free entry there, and his spirit of intrigue continued to arouse the distrust of the English Jesuits. In matters of faith, however, he was uncompromising, and this led him, as it did Lord Arundel and the greater part of the Catholics, to refuse the

¹⁹ *The Jesuits and the Popish Plot*, p. 159. Among the principal "informers" of Shaftesbury, Mr. Hay has good reason to include, at the beginning of the plot, the Catholic priest of whom we have already spoken, John Sergeant (see Chapter 20). Perhaps he even "supplied the egg which was later hatched by Titus Oates." His hatred of Archbishop Talbot and the Jesuits led him to make denunciations which, following on the wild fanaticism of Oates, and the calculated sectarianism of Shaftesbury, brought on without his being able to foresee it the persecution of all the Catholics (*ibid.*, 170-91). As though to summarize and symbolize his profound thought, the portrait which Mr. Hay places at the beginning of his book—the only one moreover in the whole work—is that of Dr. John Sergeant. Shaftesbury ended as many conspirators do. Accused of high treason even during the lifetime of Charles II, acquitted by a carefully packed jury, he fled to Holland, November, 1682, and died two months later.

oath of allegiance, a fact which earned for them the abhorred title of "Jesuited papist."

Barillon summed up the entire affair quite accurately on the whole when he wrote to Pomponne, November 11th: "Coleman told the commission from the House of Commons that he never had any plan nor had he carried on any negotiations for a change in religion or government, but that he had worked only to secure liberty of conscience. As he knew that this was impossible with the present parliament, he thought a sum of three hundred thousand pounds sterling would be required. That was the proposal he had made to Father de la Chaize." But how could there have been any guilt of lèse-majesté in all that, since his aspirations went hand in hand with the most secret desires—and even attempts—of Charles himself?

Thus, in the trial of November 27th, when Sir George Jeffreys accused Coleman of having tried to "overturn the Protestant religion, incite rebellion among the faithful subjects of his Majesty, and kill the king; "and when the advocate Maynard in turn accused him of "having tried to kill the king, change the government of the nation, overturn the Protestant religion and introduce in its place Roman superstition and popery," Jeffreys and Maynard repeated the lesson passed on by Oates and Shaftesbury, but they lied. "There was no proof of crime, much less of treason," declared David Hume.²⁰

The Lord Chief Justice, William Scroggs, instead of acting as counsel for the accused, as his office required, pleaded against him, and everytime that Coleman defended himself against the charge of attempting the life of the king and of treason, Scroggs interrupted him violently to say: "All this talk is beside the question! This man is accused of wanting to introduce popery into the kingdom, and to promote the interests of France." During the whole of the ensuing trial, Scroggs behaved in the same way, terrifying the witnesses for the defense with his looks, because he was terrified himself by the populace. He so far forgot the ordinary rules of equity as to declare publicly that the papists, not having the same principles as the Protestants, had no right to the same consideration. Thus, this iniquitous judge deserves what G. N. Clark says of him in the recent *Oxford*

²⁰ *Op. cit.*, 247.

History of England: "The name of Scroggs remains infamous because of his brutality towards his victims." ²¹ This will be the verdict of history.

For some weeks Charles II refused to sign the death warrant for the Jesuits, and when at last he did sign it, said: "Let their blood fall upon those who condemned them, God knows that I sign with tears in my eyes." But he was much more ready to sign in Coleman's case. Doubtless he must have stiffened towards him on perceiving his own need for money noised abroad in so many letters. Not that he himself made any mystery of it, since on New Year's Day, 1679, he admitted to Barillon that for lack of resources he was going to be obliged to withdraw his ambassadors from the continent. But how many courtiers at Versailles and prelates at Rome had been informed by Coleman that the king of England was reduced to beggary! Such indiscretion—the same thing was to cause the fall of Danby—brought it about that no one took any interest in his fate.

Charles, however, having promised Coleman full and complete pardon if he would make some revelations, the prisoner gave this touching reply: "What's the use? You know enough to wish to take away my life, and I do not know enough to be able to save it." ²² He was the scapegoat of the hatred which had accumulated against the Duke of York, but he remained unfailingly faithful to his master, and continued to insist right up to the hour of his death: "The prince should not be held responsible for my imprudences. I enter the most energetic denial of all the attempts, the conception of which some have dared to impute to the most august persons."

The sentence reserved to traitors was passed against Coleman: "He shall be hanged until he is half-strangled, then cut down while still alive, mutilated, disembowelled, his heart and entrails burned on the spot, then quartered and the head exposed at the crossroads as a warning to his coreligionists. And may God have mercy on his soul" Coleman was led to Tyburn on December 3rd. After renewing his profession of faith and declaring that the Catholic religion

²¹ In the volume, *The Later Stuarts*, 1934, p. 90.

²² Osmund Airy, *op. cit.*, p. 334.

contained nothing prejudicial to the king and the government, he calmly underwent his torture.

It has been possible to reproach Coleman for his political imprudence. But it remains certain that his aim—his "great project"—was to obtain liberty of conscience for English Catholics, and therefore to maintain, or to facilitate for himself and his compatriots the integrity of their Christian faith. This was to allow the Church one day to beatify him with the title of martyr, a true witness to God even to the shedding of his blood.

Beginning with the following January, a number of Jesuits were to share the same fate. They also received the same honor from the Church, two and a half centuries later.

Meanwhile, a few months later, parliament, just as Coleman had desired, was dissolved by the king and the popular frenzy began to abate. Outside London sensible and reflecting men paused, as Charles had foreseen they must, to ask themselves whether they had not been befooled, and what kind of picture their country presented to the rest of the world. A learned scholar, whom the College of Christ Church was soon to elect a fellow, wrote to a friend: "I much fear that this business at last will appear very foul and render us odious and contemptible through all Europe."

And yet this madness, before it abated, swept Father La Colombière into its vortex. At the moment of Coleman's death Claude had been imprisoned for two weeks in the foul dungeons of King's Bench.

Confessor of the Faith,

November-December, 1678

WHEN he was criticized for allowing himself to be too easily deceived by apostates, Father La Colombière replied: "Thank God, it meant no more to me than a loss of money!" The experience of Father de Saint-Germain could have made him fear that one day there might be worse. . . .

Claude was not involved even indirectly in the fantastic calumnies of Titus Oates. The jailing of Coleman was the occasion in a round-about way, on the night of October 30th, of a warrant against M. Nephoe, regular secretary of the Duchess of York. He was arrested and his papers seized. But three days later this arrest and seizure were followed by a verdict of no true bill and a restoration. No one disturbed La Colombière, so little known was he and so far removed from politics.

However, "as there was no better employment in England at the time for relieving one's financial needs than to uncover a plot," great was the temptation on the part of the hungry to turn informer. In fact, the "faithful servant and perfect friend" of Christ was, like Christ, betrayed by a Judas.

"In London," he wrote, "I was accused by a young man from Dauphiny, whom I thought I had converted and whom I had supported for the space of three months or so after his feigned conversion. His conduct, about which I had some reason to complain, and my inability to continue helping him, obliged me to let him go. He thought he would take revenge on me by making known our association. He did so, and at the same time imputed to me certain words against the king and the parliament. As he knew something

of my affairs, he did not fail to accuse me of serious crimes in the good I had done among a few Protestants; and he made me appear much more zealous, and much more successful in my efforts than I actually was."

This man from Dauphiny—a compatriot consequently of La Colombière—had called himself du Fiquet. Perhaps he belonged to a family named Fiquet which actually lived at Saint-Symphorien. This would explain the special interest which Claude had taken in him.

Thanks to the author of *Conspirations d'Angleterre*, which are completed by Evelyn's *Journal*, and by the minutes of the House of Lords, we are able to know all the details of this intrigue.

On November 5th, anniversary of the day in 1605 when the Gunpowder Plot was discovered, sermons of thanksgiving were preached with glowing fervor in all the churches. The bishop of Exeter had come expressly from Devonshire to recall how heaven then miraculously preserved England from papist attacks. At St. Margaret's, Dr. Tillotson, in the presence of members of the House of Commons, sprinkled his sermon with inflammatory allusions to the recent denunciations by Titus Oates. The mad agony which had been awakened the preceding week by the spectacular funeral of Edmund Berry Godfrey was still growing. The Lords had ordered prayers and a fast for the following week, and passions were at their height.

Sunday, November 11th, as the king had to go to Parliament, the curious from every quarter, both English and foreigners, crowded into the lower hall of Westminster to see a train of prisoners pass in after the lords. Doubtless, there would be among them the papist Choqueux, upon whom had been discovered only three days before—terrifying thing!—all the paraphernalia for fireworks. The enquiry must have revealed that this material which had been stored away for the last eleven years was not intended for a children's game. . . . Avid for an emotional spree, everybody came to hear the news.

Fiquet was in the crowd. In front of another Frenchman, named Petit, a porter among the merchants, as they looked at the file of prisoners, he let the remark escape: "The Jesuit from our country

also has a long tongue. If he had any enemies they could easily cause him trouble." Petit, naturally, asked: "Whom do you mean?" The other explained, and Petit added at once: "You must absolutely denounce your La Colombière. If you don't, I will myself." Twenty pounds sterling had been offered for a priest, a hundred for a Jesuit. Fiquet could not forego this piece of luck. As he was uninformed in this trade and unable besides to draw up a report, he went without delay to find a minister whom he knew to be enterprising and unscrupulous. Without having the slightest notion of it, he went to the same man who had formerly denounced Father de Saint-Germain, the son of the actress Beauchateau, who had assumed the name of Luzancy.

Out of all of Fiquet's gossip Luzancy retained six points, which he "set down clearly," as constituting the leading counts of his indictment: 1st, La Colombière, chatting with him, had told him that the king was Catholic at heart (a remark already attributed by Luzancy to Saint-Germain); 2nd, that parliament would not always be master, or have the same power; 3rd, La Colombière was intimate with Coleman; 4th, he had bribed a man named Salomon, formerly a Recollet in France, to return to his monastery; he had also caused the wife of the said Salomon to give up the Protestant religion, to which she later returned; 5th, he was caring for a convent of nuns who were living in hiding in London; 6th, priests were to be sent to Virginia or the New World, and he had been presented for that mission.

Luzancy had been the protégé of Crampton, bishop of London, who, we recall, had hurriedly made the renegade a minister to reward him for his bitter accusations against the papists. On November 12th, armed with his precious memorial, he presented Fiquet to Crampton. The bishop sent the two accomplices to the lord chancellor, and the accusation followed in course.

The next day had been fixed for the national fast. At the request of the two Houses, all the churches re-echoed with this prayer: "Almighty God, who have in part discovered the designs and foiled the attempts of the popish conspirators, who under the pretext of religion have plotted only for its destruction; of these wretched men who by

treason and by the assassination of the sacred person of his Majesty are trying to introduce among us the tyranny of a foreign power and the abomination of a superstitious worship in order to reduce to slavery the souls and bodies of Your servants, continue, we beseech You. . . ." Nerves were strained more and more; hearts were set to the pitch of a holy vengeance, to which the conspirators—the real conspirators—wished to lead them.

That very night the apartment of Father La Colombière at St. James was broken into. "I was arrested in my room," he wrote, "two hours after midnight." He was kept there out of sight for two days.

Meanwhile, Saturday morning, November 16th, the Marquis of Winchester, to whom the lords had entrusted the preparation of the trial, gave a long audience to the noble Olivier du Fiquet, listened to him benevolently, and on his mere word, under oath, without hearing any witnesses, gave the order for the transfer of La Colombière to the prison of King's Bench. It was Sunday. "I was taken out two days later," he wrote, "to be examined and confronted with my accuser, before twelve or fifteen commissioners from the House of Lords." Father de la Pesse describes the scene:

Before entering the court they had to wait some time in a hall which was close by, and there in view of a crowd of all kinds of people, he took out his breviary to recite the Divine Office. He then stood before his judges with a modesty which created a perceptible presumption of innocence. He answered the interrogation . . . in which the lords clearly showed that they did not believe him guilty. Some of the commission treated him with considerable politeness. All that was alleged against him was that he had made conversions. But finally it was necessary to treat the father as though he were a criminal, so as not to have to lose the scoundrels who were destroying so many good men, if he were declared innocent.

"After that," adds La Colombière, "they led me back to prison, where I was very closely guarded for three weeks."

And yet,—the English law is peremptory—a single witness is no witness. If that was all they needed! The taverns of London were glutted with accommodating informers. All one had to do was to choose without too much disregard for probabilities. And as Oates

had his Bedloe, du Fiquet had his Verdier. This latter, his lesson well conned, appeared on the 19th before Lord Anglesey who had been delegated by the House of Lords. But Verdier who was well acquainted with his crony, would have found it strange to give him the *de* of nobility. From beginning to end of his deposition, he called him simply Fiquet.

Thus supported, the Marquis of Winchester and Lord Anglesey were able to bring before the House of Lords the results of their investigation. It was at the full s^éssion of Thursday, November 21st. Before a brilliant assembly made up of five dukes, of which "His Royal Highness the Duke of York" was one, of twenty-nine earls, one viscount, two lords, the chancellor and the keeper of the privy seal, and twenty-eight other lords,—the Lord Marquis of Winchester reported on the two interrogatories [he should have said "denunciations"],—one of Olivier du Fiquetts (sic), the other of Francis Verdier, which were read as follows." We should devoutly gather these accusations, the only complaints which hatred and treason had succeeded in forging against the redoubtable Jesuit. It is one of his fairest titles to glory.¹

The following summary is taken from the *Journal of the House of Lords* and contains the accusations which were submitted to that body by the informers. First, the deposition of "Olivier du Fiquetts" . . . —before the noble Lords the informer must be given his usurped title of nobility.

1. La Colombière, Jesuit and preacher to the Duchess, hath for the space of three months, had frequent communication with Mr. Coleman, who came every day to communicate with him in his chamber, from eleven in the morning till mid-day. Further that Monsieur La Colombière sent his servant Lievre to stay in the country for the space of two months and a half, and took to his service the nephew of Mr. Coleman, betwixt thirteen

¹ We translate the reports of Winchester and Anglesey from the *Journal of the House of Lords*. One will be still more convinced of their accuracy by comparing them with the letter of denunciation, written in French by Fiquet to the Bishop of London. Some fifty years ago this letter was preserved in the library of the Marquis of Bath, at Longleat, Warminster. In 1890, at the request of Father Gallwey, The Duchess of Buccleuch, sister of the Marquis, obtained a copy of it for Father Charrier.

and fourteen years old. And after that Mr. Coleman was put in prison, Monsieur La Colombière took his servant again and sent away the nephew of Mr. Coleman, and went to live in the country. Further I know, that Monsieur La Colombière hath great correspondence with Father La Chaise and with Cardinal Bouillon.

2. Monsieur La Colombière told me, to induce me to his religion, that if I made so much difficulty the king would not hinder me to make choice of the Roman Catholic religion, seeing he knew very well that the king was a Catholic in his heart.

3. Furthermore, when I represented to him 'that the parliament would not suffer perversion in England,' M. La Colombière said to me, 'that if the parliament opposed Roman Catholics the king would dissolve it.' And further, 'That the parliament should not be always master.' He told me also, 'That I should see in a little time all England changed,' which also was confirmed to me many times by his servant.

4. And, as I had a design to go study at Oxford, he turned me from it in representing to me, 'that if I went to study at Oxford I should fill my mind with the errors which the divinity at Oxford teacheth, contrary to Holy Scripture; and if I would return into France he would, by means of Father La Chaise, Jesuit, and confessor of the king of France, place me to study in the College of Clermont, and also that he did write to Paris, to a Jesuit, in the absence of Father La Chaise, whose answer I read myself in M. La Colombière's chamber, and also that I had told the Duke of York that he had turned me from my purpose of being a minister, and said that his Highness had expressed much satisfaction in it, which surprised me much. But then M. La Colombière told me, 'that I ought not to wonder at that, seeing that his Highness was a Catholic, and received often the sacraments.' This also was confirmed to me by his servant.

5. Moreover, Monsieur La Colombière hath received many abjurations in his chamber, as well of French as of English, and also I spoke in his chamber to an English gentleman, whom he sent into France to pervert, by means of Cardinal Bouillon.

6. That Monsieur Drevil,² a Frenchman, carried to M. La Colombière an English merchant to pervert him, whom La Colombière was to send into France, and his family, to the Cardinal Bouillon.

7. That M. La Colombière sends secretly priests into Virginia, amongst others Maccarty, an Irish priest, who was carried by La Colombière's serv-

² Perhaps Father d'Obeilh, a French Jesuit who was living in fact at the French embassy.

ant, and by his order to M. Le Choquenna, who lives at the Savoy³; and also La Colombière told me, 'That he desired to go thither.' This is all I can confirm upon oath.

8. Furthermore, that La Colombière hath made Mass to be said at Mr. Angus' by Maccarty every Sunday and holiday, and also in the country.

9. That La Colombière hath seduced M. Salamon, a minister at the Savoy, to put him into a convent, and another person that was come with an intention to enter into the ministry; La Colombière hath sent them into France, and gave them money in Picardy in his servant Lievre's house, and they then were to pass to Rome by the means of Cardinal Bouillon.

This is all that I can affirm upon oath, and in the presence of the parties.

This reading finished, the noble lords again lent a favorable ear to the string of gossip from the second witness, which was required by law. Because of the insignificance of the informer, or the incoherence of his language, Lord Anglesey thought he could recall only three phrases, doubtless, because he was not very proud of them; also, perhaps, because he was ashamed of the employment which the fear of Titus Oates had laid upon him, he was not present at the meeting. All we read of it is the denunciation, made and sworn to before him, and which he countersigned:

Francis Verdier saith that about five or six weeks since he was at Monsieur Colombière's chamber with Mr. Fiquet, and then heard the said Colombière speak to Mr. Fiquet, persuading him to become a Catholic, using arguments for it. Whereupon the aforesaid Fiquet said, 'Though all were true that he urged, yet it was not fit for him in this country, while the king would not permit it.' To which the said Colombière replied, 'That the king would not take it ill if he, the said Fiquet, should turn Catholic, for that the king was himself a Catholic in his heart.'

Sworn the 19th day of November, 1678.

Anglesey.

The text of these denunciations calls for some remarks. At the end of Fiquet's letter to Bishop Crampton a paragraph recalls this word of the first memorandum, "set out clearly" by Luzancy, that "La

³ A section constructed on the site of the palace which was built earlier by Philibert, Count of Savoy. It was near Somerset House, between the Thames and the Strand.

Colombière cared for a convent of nuns who were living in hiding in London." "A number of young women," the letter specifies, in a house near St. Paul's, who led a monastic life. . . ." Who were these religious?

In these lamentable times London possessed no others than the daughters of the noble and saintly woman who was called Mary Ward. Their dwelling in St. Martin's Lane was a very ordinary house which had nothing of the exterior appearance of a convent. They themselves wore neither habit nor headdress which distinguished them from people of the world. Founded in the first quarter of the seventeenth century to undertake the education of young girls, they worked without shutting up their pupils behind convent grilles, as was done in those days, and themselves aimed at leading the life of the cloister without the helps of the cloister. About the same time, St. Francis de Sales conceived a similar ambition for religious women who would visit the sick poor, and for that reason were called "Sisters of the Visitation." As sometimes happens with advance guard troops, Mary Ward and her companions suffered some terrible blows, like the Apostle Paul, "on the right hand and on the left" [II Cor. 6:7]. In 1631 they had to disperse. In the following year Urban VIII called them to Rome, and under the protection of the Apostolic See "The Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary" was born. Recommended by the Pope in 1639 to the young Henrietta of France, Queen of England, the community began to regroup its scattered members in London. And although three years later Mary Ward had gone to Yorkshire, her native country, to found a house in which she was to die, the Institute continued its task of education from that time on, as far as the troubled times permitted.

The Foundress having from the beginning moulded her rule on that of St. Ignatius, it is not surprising that her daughters would, at one time or other, have recourse for the good of their souls to the preacher at St. James. Is it of one of them that La Colombière was speaking when he wrote to his brother in July 1677: "Dear God! the holy women I meet here! You would be surprised if I were to tell you how they live." ⁴ Everywhere prosperous today, this Institute

⁴ VI, 273.

numbered among its most solid traditions a fervent devotion to the Sacred Heart, the beginnings of which it attributes to Blessed Claude.

Another move by the Jesuit to which the informer took exception was that while his servant took two months vacation in the country during the height of the summer, he had dared to replace him by having recourse to the good offices of Coleman's nephew, an innocent youngster of between thirteen and fourteen. Was not this so that he could plot at greater ease, and bring to perfection, away from indiscreet eyes, the final preparations for the conspiracy? To add weight to this suspicion, Fiquet noted that at the first news of the uncle's arrest, La Colombière prudently sent the nephew away. The fact is that Claude had only yielded to the good impulses of his heart. At the hottest point of the summer, which was as chaplain Ronchi wrote, "extraordinarily warm, causing many fatal sicknesses all through the kingdom, and at London (then a rather small town) more than five hundred deaths a week," he wanted to afford Lelièvre, a worthy countryman from Picardy, a bit of rest in the country. When, on Shaftesbury's order he was questioned on the matter, Coleman had no difficulty in proving that he had lent his nephew merely to do a service, and to get him a healthy vacation with an eminent teacher; in turn, the boy could help to perfect the other's English. Besides, "La Colombière had sent him back several weeks before he himself was sent to prison."

Finally, in the presence of Winchester Fiquet noted this detail—which he had omitted four days earlier in his letter to the bishop—that the preacher to the Duchess, after Coleman's arrest, had "left for the country," hinting that, conscious of his guilt, he was avoiding pursuit. This detail and its malicious interpretation were not overlooked by Sir John Pollock. In his book on the *Popish Plot*, he writes without batting an eye: "La Colombière had concealed himself, but was discovered and arrested." Three words and two errors, which come very close to being lies.

The truth is much simpler. After the feast of the Assumption and the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin, Claude, exhausted by his losses of blood, which were becoming more frequent, must have wished to take advantage of the interruption in his preaching to get a few

weeks rest. The Duchess of York had left London. Whether she was at Windsor, or in "the palace of Prince Rupert, restored for her on a magnificent scale, at the highest point of the village," even before spending part of the month of October in Holland with her step-daughter Mary, she had no further need of her preacher. It was quite natural for him to return to the Palace of St. James towards the feast of All Saints, when she returned to take up her residence there. When Shaftesbury ordered his arrest on November 14th, there was no need of sharp-nosed detectives to "discover him." He was at his post.

It is indeed sad to think that the foremost assembly of a nation, chosen from the elite of its nobility, among whom surely men should be found with some traditions of honor, but who were terrorized by downright ruffians, by old offenders, by forgers, by denizens of drinking hells and dens of vice, should be obliged "to sit from morning until night" (decision of November 1st) to lend an ear to such shameless idiocy. We understand how Antoine Arnauld—the great Arnauld—who can hardly be suspected, moreover, of partiality towards the Jesuits, after having enunciated the six heads of the accusation drawn up by Fiquet and Luzancy against La Colombière, should have allowed these indignant lines to leap from his pen:

I ask every reasonable man if there is anything in these six articles which had even the shadow of a conspiracy against the king or against the state. But what Isaias said of the Jewish people is literally true of the English today: "All that this people speaketh is a conspiracy" (Isa. 8:12).

A Jesuit, with the king's approval, chaplain of his sister-in-law, advises an apostate monk to return to his monastery; it is a conspiracy. He directs a few young Catholic women who wish to live as religious in London; a conspiracy. He desires that some priests be sent to preach the faith to the infidels in some parts of America occupied by the English; conspiracy. Nothing could be more absurd.

The apologist might have added: he allows his servant a few days in the country to escape the pestilential heat—conspiracy. He himself takes a little rest in order to check the consumption he is suffering from—conspiracy. Conspiracy again, if he shelters a young man to keep him from vagrancy during his vacation.

And after that, concludes Arnauld, they want us to be simple enough to believe that it is not for religion that the Catholics of England are being persecuted, but merely for conspiracy! As if there could be anything less reasonable than to recognize a Frenchman as a Catholic priest, allow him to perform his duties in the palace of a princess, and at the same time punish him with prison, and perhaps worse, for things which we must expect him to do on occasion unless we are to suppose that he is without zeal for his religion.⁵

In the meantime, their lordships were informed that an incident of special gravity had just taken place. An Italian cleric, sacristan of St. James chapel, had come to see La Colombière in his dungeon, and had dared to ask the marshall of King's Bench for pen and ink for the prisoner "to write two words." The request was innocent in appearance only. This cleric, the marshall affirmed, wished to obtain from the Jesuit the address of his two accusers. And for what purpose, if not to draw upon them and their families the vengeance of the papists? Another conspiracy! Fortunately Shaftesbury was awake. Summoned at once, Antonio appeared on November 20th. He was a simple, honest sacristan in whom there was no guile, and therefore all the more to be feared, perhaps. "Signora Peregrina Turina," he said, "sent me on orders from her Highness the Duchess of York, to see Colombière in prison and to find out whether he needed anything. But I deny absolutely that I was informed of the place where the two men who accused him lived."

Shaftesbury did not dismiss him. Immediately, in order to convict Antonio of lying, the marshall was required to appear before the board of enquiry, the next day November 21st, the very day on which the lords met to hear the accusations of Fiquet and Verdier. It was summoned for two o'clock. Antonio was also cited and when confronted stood by his statement: "Pen and ink, so that the father could write two words—not the names of two men or their addresses—two words." Was the marshall hard of hearing, or Antonio less

⁵ *Apologie pour les Catholiques*, p. 475 ff. A curious sign of the times—Father de la Pesse was not at all grateful to Arnauld for testifying in favor of La Colombière. "He said as little as he could in defense of the Jesuits. . . . It made little difference to Father La Colombière to have him as defender" (*Préface*, *op. cit.*, xxvii ff.).

expert in his use of English than his own sweet tongue of Modena, that he was not able to make himself understood? We shall never know. Surely the conspiracy in turning into a farce.

Shaftesbury however persisted. On November 22nd there was a sudden citation for Lelièvre to give an account of his vacation in the country. Moreover, had he not observed anything suspicious in the movements of his master? The explanations of the canny Picard were so natural, his good nature so obvious, that he was forthwith sent away.

At last on November 23rd the lords, duly informed of all these citations, notifications, enquiries, counter-enquiries,* and favorable evidence, saw clearly that they could not from this mass of testimony, and even less from the accusations of Fiquet and Verdier, concoct any offense that would allow them to indict La Colombière for high treason. As a result, their lordships assembled in parliament, were willing to ask the penalty of banishment for him. Whereupon, we read in the trial report, the House made the ensuing order:

Upon report made from the Lords' Committees appointed to examine persons for the discovery of the horrid design against his Majesty's person and government. That upon the examination of Olivier du Fiquet and Francis Verdier, taken upon oath, it appeareth that La Colombière (a Jesuit, and preacher to the Duchess), now prisoner in the King's Bench, hath held frequent and long communications with Mr. Coleman, and hath great correspondence with Father La Chaise and with Cardinal Bouillon, and that he hath endeavored to pervert the said Olivier du Fiquet and Francis Verdier, and others, to the Popish religion, using arguments of a dangerous nature for that purpose, and hath in his chamber received many abjurations of persons as well French as English, and that he hath secretly sent priests into Virginia, of whom Maccarty, an Irish priest was one. All which matters being of dangerous consequence, and in opposition to the peace and government of this kingdom, it is thereupon ordered by the Lords Spiritual and Temporal, in Parliament assembled, that the Lords with White Staves do attend his Majesty, humbly to desire him from this House, that his Majesty will be pleased to give order that the said La Colombière may be banished out of this kingdom and all other his Majesty's territories and dominions wheresoever.

On receipt of this petition, Charles II answered that "the order had been given." The fact is, he hesitated. Why banishment? He had too much British common sense not to see the unreal character of the grievances alleged. To banish a man under these conditions would be a clear injustice. At the time of his brother's marriage contract the king had promised, in favor of the future Duchess of York, the right of a chapel, which evidently included a preacher. If the failure to keep his word to the young and powerless Duke of Modena could be only a venial fault, the offense in the eyes of Louis XIV would be a grave insult. From his grandfather, Henry IV, Charles retained enough of a sense of humor to be afraid that if he appeared to take such accusations seriously, he would be the laughingstock of the Paris salons. He waited.

The instinct of the people reacted more vigorously. In a letter of November 24th to her *fratello*, Mary Beatrice wrote: "The stage-players have come at a time when we all feel more like weeping than laughing." Among them was a certain Carlier, an opera singer. Dissatisfied at seeing people less interested in his roulades than in the political shows offered by parliament to the loungers, he also became indignant at the dishonesty of Fiquet. Meeting him one day in a tavern, like a good fellow-countryman he did not mince words with him. A quarrel followed which brought to the lips of Carlier the choicest insults in the repertory of Molière. Here again Shaftesbury was upset. On his orders a witness of the quarrel, M. Le Page, was cited to appear before the Earl of Clarendon. Indeed, this rabble of Titus Oates forced the noble lords to engage in strange tasks. Le Page bore witness to the high words. There had also been "mutual recriminations," but he could not "say positively" who had been the first to begin it. What he had "clearly seen, at any rate, was Carlier raising his fist to strike Fiquet. And that very morning of his appearance in court, Le Page had heard Carlier say that he was sorry that he had not given him a better drubbing." Carlier availed himself of the privilege of artist, for "finishing his performance at the opera, he always went to sing in the chapel of the French Embassy." He was nonetheless summoned, and told "to provide himself with testimonials of good behavior, and ordered to appear in turn before the Earl of Clarendon."

All this would be subject for laughter if we did not remember that during these ludicrous summonses, La Colombière in his dungeon was taking care of his consumption with the aid of the cold, the dampness, and hunger. The King's Bench after many conflagrations has finally disappeared. But we do not need the sight of its walls to know of the prison regimes in London at that time. In spite of improvements which had been introduced in his time, John Howard, at the end of the eighteenth century, has drawn a horrible picture of them.

Food allowances were shockingly reduced. Even when the jailer received an allotment of food, "he farmed his prisoners, and engaged to supply each with so much bread daily for a penny or two; but he reduced the portion to half or even less." "Many of the prisoners lacked water." The air was so foul and the odor so sickening that after his first visit Howard, haunted by the nasty smell in his clothing, or perhaps simply in his memory, "could no longer travel in his coach with the doors closed." The aromatic vinegar which he used to neutralize the stench "began to reek itself in no time." As to the straw which served as bedding, stabling rather, "it was changed only after some months, when it was nothing more than dust or muck." Many of the prisoners had nothing but rags on the bare floor to lie on. As to morals, there was reason to hope that they would have spared a priest from St. James the hideous promiscuity of which the investigator speaks. We can guess the result.

Their pale and yellow color was enough to reveal their terrible misery even before they spoke. Such as arrived healthy were no longer so after a few months, no more than were these emaciated beings. . . . From observations carried on for three years I am fully convinced that more prisoners have died of 'prison fever'—so they call a kind of typhoid—than have been put to death in the whole kingdom. The expression of heartless creditors, 'Go, rot in jail' is well known and contains no exaggeration.⁶

Concerning his stay in the King's Bench, La Colombière confined himself to these words: "After which (that is, my examination), they took me to jail, where I was very closely guarded for three weeks. Several times during this interval, members of parliament

⁶ John Howard, *The State of Prisons in England and Wales*, 1784.

summoned the witnesses whom my accusers had cited against me. Not finding anything of what they had at first hoped to find, namely, some light on the sham conspiracy which they attributed to the Catholics, I was not called at all."

We should like to know the thoughts of La Colombière during those days when he was a witness for Christ. In similar circumstances, during the Commune of Paris, Father Olivaint was able to communicate with his brethren and tell them, for example: "My cell is more modest than the *rue de Sèvres*, and that is a gain." Or again, after more than six weeks of captivity: "If you knew how sweet my little cell, especially after a few days, has become to me!" But La Colombière, as we know, had neither pen nor ink, nor paper, nor light perhaps. To enlighten us there is one single but precious word, written a month later from Paris: "It would take too long if I were to tell you all the mercies that God did me on each point, and almost at every instant. What I can tell you is that I was never so happy as I was in the midst of that storm." *Ibant gaudentes*. . . .

Meanwhile the king, harried between two contrary fears, continually hesitated: there was his fear of Louis XIV, which prevented him from banishing his prisoner, and his fear of parliament, which did not permit him to free him. He was the man of half-measures who prolongs suffering. Did he hope that in the tumult of accusations they would end by forgetting La Colombière in King's Bench? . . . The lords in a new address insisted, and Charles had to obey.

Consequently his Majesty *has judged it good to order*, and by these presents it is so ordered, conformably to the motion of the lords, that the custodian of the said prison of King's Bench have the said Monsieur Colombier leave his imprisonment, and place him in the hands of John Bradley, one of the ordinary messengers of his Majesty, who is instructed to make sure of his person, and conduct him to the sea shore and there see that he is put aboard a vessel and transported over seas.

The privy council had on December 6th already registered the royal order. Fortunately for his honor, the Duke of York was excluded. But among the twenty-four members present, there was Crampton, Bishop of London and high protector of Luzancy; the

Earl of Peterborough, the head of the legation, who five years earlier at Modena had received the matrimonial consent of Mary Beatrice, and had in return confirmed the promise of a preacher. But in politics promises count for so little!

Meanwhile, in the plenary council of this December 6th, the king and his twenty-four assessors were informed that the prisoner had just been taken with violent hemorrhages. Pity touched several hearts for a moment, and at once, at the suggestion, we should like to think, of Charles or of Peterborough, a second decree was drawn up:

Since it was ordered yesterday by his Majesty in Council that the jailer of the prison of King's Bench should deliver to the keeping of John Bradley, one of the ordinary messengers of his Majesty, the person of M. Colombier, French Jesuit, to be banished and transported over seas conformably to a petition recently sent to his Majesty by the House of Lords, and since the execution of the answer of his Majesty to the House of Lords has been deferred until now, and because it was represented that the prisoner was in a state of weakness, is consumptive and spitting blood, so that the voyage might place his life in danger, and as he is still suffering from the same illness, and that several days are absolutely necessary for him to recover sufficient strength for the said voyage, and that he will probably be able to restore his strength by breathing a better air than that of the prison, his Majesty has judged it good to order, and it is by these presents ordered that the said John Bradley take the same M. Colombier in charge and under his keeping, allowing him all the comforts he requires for his health, so that his stay in the city and its environs does not exceed the space of ten days after he is released from King's Bench, but at the expiration of these ten days, or before, he leave with his prisoner for the coast, and then hand over to the clerk of the Council in service, an attestation that the said prisoner has embarked to be transported over seas.

The favor of "breathing a better air than that of the prison". . . . Was this a cruel euphemism, or a bit of derision? Although this recovery is considered only as "probable," let us give the council credit for the hope it places in this treatment. A generosity truly royal, for which Charles must have congratulated himself: ten days—not a day more!—granted to this consumptive who had just suffered a serious relapse.

The decree, which we find in the registers of the privy council, confirms point by point what La Colombière writes: "Fortunately I fell sick with a spitting of blood . . . which gave us a pretext for asking the king to give me time to gain a little strength. He gave me ten days, during which I was released on parole, when I had the leisure to say farewell to many persons whom I was very happy to see before leaving." A formidable conspirator indeed, who was permitted to see whom he pleased of his friends within a few steps of the royal palace of Whitehall! "

Among those whom he could not greet, we must mention his companion of St. James Palace, Father Thomas Bedingfield, chaplain of the Duke of York. Strong in the assurance of his innocence, Father Bedingfield had presented himself to his accusers on November 3rd. Perhaps he relied on the popularity he had acquired as chaplain on board the flagship at the Battle of Solebay. But Oates and Shaftesbury could not forgive him who in the preceding August, coming into chance possession of letters forged by Tonge, had loyally delivered them to the king, and thus all but killed the conspiracy in the bud. Bedingfield was closely guarded for six months at Gatehouse, fell into a rapid decline, and died there December 21st. It was a very painful impossibility for the naturally tender heart of the Duke of York, not to be able to save from the hatred of factions a priest whom he loved and whom he knew to be innocent!

Another Jesuit, Edward Mico, surnamed Harvey, companion to the provincial, was unmercifully beaten by soldiers, roughly treated for several months, and finally succumbed on December 3rd, in the foul dungeons of Newgate. As to the provincial, Father Thomas Whitbread, of whom it had been said that he poisoned himself to escape torture, he appeared at the very moment when La Colombière was leaving London, December 17th, in company of Fathers Ireland, Fenwick, and several others before the commission of enquiry. Ireland, procurator of the province, had been arrested by Oates personally on the famous night of September 28th. They had hopes of finding in his accounts records of sums which had been paid for the supposed plot by Don Juan, Father de La Chaize, the general of the Jesuits, and the provincial of Castile. His imprisonment was pro-

longed, and to avenge themselves for not having been able to discover in his books the least trace of these fantastic payments, he was to be hanged at Tyburn January 24, 1679. Whitbread and Fenwick, against whom Bedloe himself had no particular charge, were nevertheless sent back to Newgate, but separately, to the most secret place, and finally put to the torture and executed at Tyburn with a number of others on June 20th.

Thus La Colombière left England at the height of the storm. We must remember this if we wish to give full value to what he wrote from Paris within a few weeks: "It was very hard for me to leave [this storm], and I am quite ready to go back to it. . .". Pray, I beg of you, for those whom I have left in so great a tribulation. They are worthy of your sympathy and your zeal. They are in great suffering and most of them show a wonderful constancy."

Claude's thoughts turned to the laymen as well as to the religious. But since we must limit ourselves, let us merely recall as a commentary to this letter that the plot, not the "popish" but rather the "anti-popish plot," would result for the Jesuits alone in "twenty-three condemnations to death by torture and one hundred and forty-seven deaths in the filth and squalor of the prisons." These are the numbers given in the *Annual Letters* of the English Jesuits for the year 1680.⁷ They add:

To each of these a promise of life and liberty and great rewards was made, provided only they would confess themselves guilty, and thus aid in sustaining the tottering credit of the plot. Nevertheless, out of so great a number not one was found who would purchase the safety of his family, his own liberty, nor life itself by so pernicious a falsehood; and in this they were encouraged by the example of our fathers, against whom this tempest chiefly raged.

It was Blessed Claude's honor to have taken his place among these confessors of the faith.

⁷ *Records, op. cit.*, p. 80. Among the 136 English martyrs beatified by Pius XI on December 15, 1929, there are Edward Coleman and twenty-two Jesuits, priests and lay-brothers, of whom eight were put to death in 1679. To this number we must add five other Jesuits, among whom was Edmund Campion, who were martyred between 1573 and 1582, and beatified by Leo XIII, December 29, 1886.

☞ PART FOUR

Immolation

“Exile” in France, January, 1680

DURING the octave of the feast of St. Francis Xavier in the year 1674, while Claude was engaged in prayer, “a great light” suddenly flashed in his mind.

I thought I saw myself, he wrote, loaded with fetters and chains, dragged to prison, accused and condemned because I had preached Jesus crucified and dishonored by sinners. . . . Am I to die by the hand of an executioner because of some calumny? A shiver went through me at the thought and I was filled with dread. Would God judge me worthy to suffer something striking for His honor and glory? What I saw here was only the appearance of suffering. But if God did me this honor, I would gladly accept whatever it was, prison, calumny, insult, contempt, sickness, whatever He wished to send.¹

Four years passed. . . . That which God had given him to foresee had become a reality. He was calumniated, imprisoned. Sickness took hold of him and would not let him go. He suffered insult and contempt before the tribunals and parliament. Today does he not perhaps suffer more from his helplessness? To have “held in his hands the fairest hopes in the world,” to have been the doer of “fine things” which “God was preparing for His glory,” to have beheld in the immediate future “a great harvest,” and now to find out that “he could

¹ *Notes spirituelles*, VI, 77.

do nothing!" This was frustration, disappointment, which was accentuated by a public humiliation before his brethren. To have been the trusted man of Father de la Chaize and the king of France, and to return with hands empty!

For a soul that finds it intolerable to give offense, and whose "predominant passion is the love of vainglory," for a man, moreover, who not so long ago met only with applause and success, this suffering must have been particularly bitter. In addition to the breakdown of his physical strength, it accompanied him all through his solitary journey from London to Paris. The "miracle" of his annihilation, which he had begged of God, pursued him.

La Colombière had declared: "A man about whom no one thinks any more, who is no longer anything in the world, who is nothing—that is the condition in which I must be in the future, and that, in fact, is what I desire."² His wish was granted. The aureola of confessor of the faith was visible on his brow only to the angels and simple people. In the eyes of politicians, for whom results alone have any value, he bore especially the stigma of failure, as he was unable to explain his banishment without risk of seeing himself taxed with imprudence, indiscreet zeal, perhaps still worse. Even some Catholics, misled by the rumors which propagated the sham "popish plot" across Europe, falsely suspected the English Jesuits of political intrigue. The exile must have felt some of this discredit weighing upon himself.

As soon as he arrived in Paris, about the middle of January, Claude informed his provincial, Father Louis de Camaret of the "exile to which he had been condemned." He asked for instructions, and then added:

I find it hard to return to the province in a condition in which I shall not be able to do much work this year. My lungs are much worse and are so sensitive to heat and cold that I have twice fallen sick, after a slight effort of mind, and a third time for having suffered a little from the cold. The English doctors, however, have assured me that the air of France and the restoring effects of spring weather will infallibly put me back in the condition I was before I became ill. God's will be done in everything!

² *Tertianship Retreat*, §65.

I think that, except for the work of preaching, I could do right now anything you thought me suited for. And even if you thought that I might take a chance at preaching, I would feel no repugnance to doing so. Perhaps I am only fooling myself with the thought that this would inconvenience me. I will change my opinion just as soon as I see your Reverence's order, and when I have to obey, I hope that nothing will be impossible to me, with God's grace.

Is it not touching to hear La Colombière use the word "exile" here? A Frenchman speaking like that when he returns to the land of France! It is because the apostle has taken literally God's call "to go forth out of his country," to separate himself "from his kindred and his father's house." The land of "crosses" had become *his* land. Ashamed of having escaped death, he excuses himself to one of his brethren: "I was unworthy of a greater honor, and I am in utter confusion when I reflect that our Lord had to take me out of His vineyard for not finding in me the fervor, the fidelity, which He asks of His workers."

At the professed house of the *rue Saint-Antoine*, in Paris, La Colombière met Father de la Chaize. Everything invited him to prolonged talks—gratitude, friendship, and still more, the necessity of giving an account of his mission. The *Gazette de France* of the preceding December 8th, had announced that "Mr. Coleman and one called La Colombière, prisoners in the Tower, had made entirely new revelations to the committee appointed to examine them." Would not the king's confessor wish to know what these "new revelations" were? In spite of his good nature and the high esteem which he had for Claude, it is quite possible that Father de la Chaize, in the course of these conversations, allowed a bit of temper against the Catholics beyond the Channel to show through; temper which was justified by a kind of expectation that every faithful subject of the Roman Pontiff would also be a most loyal subject of the most Christian King, a postulate which seems rather strange to us today. This conviction came to light a few weeks later, in these notes addressed to the father general: "As reasons are not wanting to his Majesty for complaint against the English Catholics, who have taken up this rebellion against him with as much imprudence as dishonesty . . . it has been

impossible up to this to obtain the least consideration for the College of St. Omers." La Colombière must have been somewhat at fault in not being able to bring the English Catholics over to French interests. The instruction given by St. Paul to Timothy he had made entirely his own, "No man being a soldier to God, entangleth himself with secular businesses" [II Tim. 2:4], and it is certain that such an interest in the temporal order had always been far from his thoughts. He himself had written: "As perfection consists in seeking to please God in all things, and to please only God . . . we should not waver in the occasions where we can acquire some esteem before Him by losing some of that which men have for us. . . . It is not before men that I wish to make my way."³ But such a decision did not prevent Claude from suffering when he felt this loss of esteem.

From Paris Claude had written to his provincial: "If I receive no letter from your Reverence before the 29th of this month, I shall leave for Lyons, and there await your instructions, my health permitting." He began his journey the last days of January. That year the cold was exceptionally severe, to the point that the Seine "was completely frozen from bank to bank." This prevented the sick man from making use of the more comfortable mode of travel by barge. In a few days, with a thousand joltings in the diligence, and after a brief rest doubtless with the Jesuits of Sens and Auxerre, he arrived among his brethren of the college of Godrans in Dijon.

Claude was not unknown in the capital of Bourgogne. Among his friends he counted the "viscount-major" of Dijon; besides, some members of the parliament were seigneurs or chatelains in the environs of Paray-le-Monial. He must have met them during his stay, because a short time later, after his return to Lyons, he wrote: "If you see M. N., Madame his wife, Madame de . . . present them with my excuses, please, for not writing them, as my health does not permit me."

At Dijon, Mother de Saumaise especially was waiting to see him. Here she was at home. Born in the city in 1620, and entering the Visitation as a boarder at the age of ten, marked out among all by St. Jeanne de Chantal on the occasion of her last visit in 1636, she had

³ *Notes spirituelles*, VI, 67.

been merely lent to Paray as superior for two three-year terms. On her return to Dijon she held the office of directrix. Following a conference which Claude gave to the whole community, he was asked to give one to the novices. As he was coming to an end, Mother de Saumaise was called out, and profiting by her absence, the traveler—we read in the annals of the convent—"gave expression to the novices of the great esteem he had for their saintly directrix. He congratulated them on being under her guidance, and added, in a flash of profound humility, that he would like to have such an advantage for himself."

Among his hearers was Sister Jeanne-Madeleine Joly, who one day was to make the first collection of pious practices in honor of the Sacred Heart, and to design the first picture for the spreading of the devotion. According to the *Année sainte* of the Visitation, Father La Colombière, who was asked by her, declared, "that one would work an infinite service for the glory of God by the spread of this devotion, and that the monastery of Dijon would be favored with special graces if it were fortunate enough to contribute by beginning the erection of a confraternity."

It was more than thirty-three months since Claude left Paray-le-Monial. In the interval many events had taken place concerning Margaret Mary, which we shall have to keep in mind, if we wish to appreciate the importance of the visit which La Colombière had just made.

The heart of Jesus in a very special way continued His demands for holiness in the convent which He had favored with such precious revelations, and that very often through the Blessed Virgin as intermediary. Was it not a matter of sanctifying the "Daughters of St. Mary?" Sister Alacoque was the confidant of these demands, and at whatever cost to herself, their messenger. We recall the notes which our Lord had her address to this or that one of her sisters.

On Assumption Day, 1677, Our Lady had given her to understand that she found only fifteen of the nuns at Paray prepared to "part from earth" and ascend with her, of whom only five were admitted as spouses of her Son. Thus "she made me see how important it is for a religious soul to be detached from everything and from herself, so

that her conversation may be in heaven." Another time the Blessed Virgin showed her "the Sacred Heart of Jesus as a source of living water," in which "five sisters of this community" had a plentiful share; lower down there were five others who were allowing "this precious water to go to waste through their own fault"; and later, five more whom this loving heart was about to disown, looking upon them only with disgust." ⁴

These two episodes were recounted by Margaret Mary in the notes which she drew up by order of Mother de Saumaise. La Colombière could have got some knowledge of them as he passed through Dijon.

The infidelities, however, continued. The day came when these secret and private warnings became plainly ineffective, and Christ had recourse to other means. "You must become," He told the Saint, "My victim of immolation, to turn aside the punishments which the divine justice of My Father wishes to visit on this community." For several days Margaret Mary had hesitated, breaking into tears and not daring to ask this permission of her superior. When she did obtain it, she still put off the offering of herself. But on November 20th, 1677, the eve of the Presentation of Mary in the Temple, she was told, as St. Paul had been told: "It is hard for you to kick against the traces of my justice! Since you have resisted me so much to avoid humiliations, I will give them to you twofold. I asked of you only a secret sacrifice. Now, I wish it to be public, accompanied with circumstances that will be a source of confusion for you for the rest of your life. . . ." Night fell. Beside herself, like a felon "with hands and feet tied . . . burning with a devouring fire to the marrow of her bones . . . her whole body caught in a strange trembling," she had to use the charitable help of a sister to find her way to Mother de Saumaise, "who at the time was ill." She stood before her superior a long time, abashed and speechless. At last, under a formal command, she stammered out "the sacrifice which God wished her to make to Him of all her being, in the presence of the community, and the reason for His demanding it." Grown accustomed to the demands of Christ, Mother de Saumaise gave the permission, and, according to Msgr. Languet, even sent her assistant "to order the religious who had assembled for

⁴ *Autob. S., Gt. II, 157.*

Matins, to do a certain penance that very night, because God was highly incensed." The first biographer of Margaret Mary has told us, according to the recollection of the survivors, of the angry silence that followed, while Christ's messenger was kneeling motionless in the midst of these assembled and mutinous daughters." In her *Autobiography*, the Saint is content to say: "If I could have gathered together all the sufferings I had known until that moment, and all those which I have had since, and if all these should continue unabated until death, all that would not seem comparable with what I went through that night." The words which follow need not be taken, we know, metaphorically: "They dragged me from place to place amid unbelievable confusion."⁵

Hearing of this terrible night, La Colombière had answered from London, December 2nd, "to share in her grief": "If I did not have a firm hope that God's mercy would be mindful of these good daughters, it would be very hard to console me."⁶ He must have been able to gather and fill in the necessary details from the oral account he received at Dijon.

On May 8th, 1678, Mother Greyfié succeeded Mother de Saumaise at Paray-le-Monial, and this change of superiors marked the beginning of fresh trials for Margaret Mary. It would be with ill grace if we called into question the fact that this "very honorable" mother was a "distinguished member" and a "worthy superior," for it is usually asserted that she was. And yet her admirers must recognize that she "had little experience in extraordinary ways." How can we be anything but surprised that she traces "the special graces received by Margaret Mary and the *first* visit which our Lord made her, back to the sacrifice she made in overcoming "the great aversion she had for cheese?" This victory is well known, but Margaret Mary was twenty-four when she won it, and numerous graces and special visits of the Lord had for a long time preceded it.

There are many other things that surprise us in the attitude of Mother Greyfié. We can overlook the superior's trying the obedience of the young professed "by giving her various commands at times and

⁵ *Autob. R.*, Gt. II, 84-87.

⁶ VI, 347.

on occasions when she seemed to be in no condition to accomplish them. The fathers of the desert have done such things, but only on rare occasions, not as a matter of course, and such a method is no ideal to be worked into daily operation. We can overlook her attitude towards Margaret Mary's desire "for contempt and sufferings," when in order to satisfy this desire, "she observed no measure with her, not fearing to rebuke her by correction and contradiction, knowing that her love for God gave her a taste for them!" This trial of her humility the superior might have thought necessary to make sure that her daughter was not being led by the spirit of pride. There are, however, two ways of giving a command, which if prolonged beyond measure, will offend our sense of justice, and, in inferiors will warp their notion of it, especially if they are sensitive souls, and are asked in matters of obedience to incline even their judgment. This would be to put their conscience in a vise. When a superior, for example, after having ordered or permitted an action, learns that the measures taken did not meet with success, will she draw respect and sympathy on her authority if she lays the blame on the one on whom she laid the command? This indeed is the attitude that Mother Greyfié found it quite natural to assume with regard to Margaret Mary. "If she happened to do something that I found displeasing, even though it had been at my command, or with my leave, I allowed her to be criticized for it, and I even blamed her myself when she was present at the faultfinding." She did not even think it strange to act in that way when La Colombière was passing through Paray. "When the Reverend Father La Colombière, on his return from England, wished to speak with her in the confessional . . . I was glad to permit it, and I did not omit in the next chapter, to call attention to it before them all, as I knew that some had taken it ill that she remained with him so long a time." Are we not to look for the explanation of such conduct in this admission of the very honored Mother? "I followed my natural bent, as I love peace and tranquillity."

That was indeed very "natural"; too much so, but it does not denote much character. We are ready however to forgive her, when we hear her recognizing that her decisions in regard to Margaret Mary "were surely sometimes prompted by injustice." The saints used other methods to try the virtue of their subjects.

It seems indeed that even heaven did not always approve Mother Greyfié's way of acting. At the desire of Christ, and with the full approval of Mother de Saumaise, Margaret Mary, every week, on Thursday or Friday night after Matins, made an extra hour of prayer in her cell—the holy hour. Learning of this, the superior forbade her to continue the practice. "Sister Alacoque," she relates, "came to me all apprehension to tell me that she thought our Lord was taking this withdrawal ill, and that she was afraid that He would demand satisfaction in a way that would be painful and unpleasant to me. But I did not yield at all. . . ." Now it happened that a young professed, Sister Quarré, in whom the convent had high hopes, was carried off by a flux of blood about the middle of October. Having examined certain "circumstances which accompanied the loss of so good a member, I gave back very quickly the hour of prayer to our esteemed deceased sister, the thought closely pursuing me that this was the punishment of which she had warned me on the part of our Lord."

It was shortly after December 31st, at the very moment that Claude was leaving England, that Margaret Mary had made to Christ, at His bidding, "a testament or donation without reserve, and that in writing, of all that she could do or suffer, of all the prayers and spiritual goods which would be offered for her, during her life and after her death." She had asked Mother Greyfié to act as witness. If she refused, Jesus Christ wished her "to apply to His servant, Father La Colombière." Made wiser by the death of Sister Quarré, the superior gave her consent.

However, the trials imposed by Mother Greyfié were not without their good results. They served as a test for the heroic virtues of her daughter, and consequently, for the divine origin of the interior movements which impelled her. If here or there she was imprudent or culpable, why not look upon it as a *felix culpa*? For the rest, the superior took advantage of Claude's passing through Paray to ask him a few questions. In fact, fear of being deceived and "of being the plaything of the powers of hell," haunted Margaret Mary.

These fears, wrote Mother Greyfié, have also had their effect on me. But I was reassured by a conversation I had with Reverend Father La Colombière. He let me know that he did not hesitate to believe that what was happening in this dear sister were true graces from God. 'But what dif-

ference does it make,' he asked me, 'if these are diabolical illusions, providing they produce the same effect in her as God's graces?' 'But there is nothing about them that looks like illusion,' he told me again, 'because the devil would find out that by trying to deceive her he was deceiving himself, for humility, simplicity, exact obedience, and mortification are not the fruits of the spirit of darkness.' With these words I found myself quite comforted.

According to the testimony of the *Contemporaries*, the Saint at this time suffered at intervals "from violent attacks of the demon, who tempted her to despair, making her see that so wicked a creature as she could not think of having a part in paradise, since she had no part in the love of God." "This good Father," declare the biographers, "did all he could to comfort her." But it was the Saint's destiny to live for a long time yet in these alternations of fear and loving confidence, clinging to God at certain moments by sheer faith alone.

La Colombière spent only a short time at Paray. Two days were first taken to recover from the effects of the journey. "I have been working for eight days on end, from morning to night," he wrote to Mother de Saumaise, "without feeling any inconvenience." Satisfied that all the good of which he had been the witness had been the work of divine grace, he added:

I should not be able to tell you how many reasons God has given me for being consoled. I have found everything in a wonderful condition, and I think that everything has improved since I left. There are many poor people whom I had forgotten, in whom God has developed the seed from which I expected but little, so that they have brought forth in their souls solid virtues and a wonderful constancy. You can realize that in eight days I was not able to spend much time with all those who wanted to talk with me, and nevertheless, it has pleased the infinite mercy of God to impart so much blessing to the few words I did give them, that everybody was satisfied and renewed in fervor. May God be glorified for it forever!

Of the religious in whom, three years earlier, he was especially interested, only Sister Marie Catherine Carme du Chailloux was unable, in spite of her desire, to get to talk with him.

At Paray, La Colombière also gave some of his time to the Ursulines. After having declared that one of the Mlles. de Bisefranc—she who by the insistence of her letters had so exercised his patience—

"was an angel," he said of the other: "The younger is not yet through with her trials, but she will generously surmount them." By these words he designated Marie de Bisefranc who had joined the Ursulines in the middle of 1678 and was still in "the trials" of the novitiate.

Despite the falling off in discipline then observed at St. Ursula, when the father found himself face to face with a solid vocation which did not seem fitted for the cloister of the Visitation, he did not hesitate to direct them to the other convent, with the purpose, he said, "of contributing to its restoration to fervor." Especially so when older persons were concerned, "because the others are too young to effect any change in their elders by their example" and they run the risk, instead of reforming them, "of being drawn along by their laxity." Even at the time that Marie de Bisefranc began her novitiate with the Ursulines, he had had the intention, while in London, of having Mlle. de Lyonne enter there. "In your case," he said in his letter, "there won't be any danger there, and the less there is of virtue in general in that house (where, however, there is more than one might think), the more means will be there of sanctifying you." The whole character of his correspondent in fact predisposed her to set herself against this tendency to tepidity, because of her simple spirit of contradiction, if for no other reason. If he gave up this idea, it was doubtless as the consequence of an incident which dates from this time.

On La Colombière's advice, an English woman of great virtue had through humility entered the Ursulines as a lay sister. When he was passing through Paray he was confirmed in the thought that this convent could only gain through contact with so generous a soul, and that she ought to remain there. Margaret Mary, however, was clearly of another mind. "Sister Marie," she asserted, "is destined for the Visitation of Charolles." Claude vainly objected "that her example seemed to be needed in the house where she was." The Saint answered: "God sometimes deprives us of things that are useful for our sanctification, when we have too much resisted His graces and exhausted His patience." The father saw no need of agreeing with this advice immediately. But the event was not long in showing Margaret Mary to be right. While "manifesting a deep regret" at the removal

of such a good subject, the Ursulines "obliged" La Colombière to "withdraw this good sister by giving him to understand that she would be a burden to them." Sister Marie left for Charolles, where together with two other English religious she led a holy life.

When the new hospital in Paray was opened in 1858, a long Latin inscription relating its history was attached to the walls. It began with these words: "This hospital, consecrated from olden times to St. Joseph Dying, established by the monks near the course of the Bourbince to receive and care for the poor, the sick, and pilgrims—several times destroyed from top to bottom and pillaged in the unhappy times of the wars—was finally at the end of the seventeenth century, on the advice of the Venerable Cl. La Colombière and of the Bl. M.-M. Alacoque, restored and given over to the sisters of Sainte Marthe de Beaune. . . ."

In the drawing up of his inscription the chaplain, M. Cucherat, had utilized an old regulation of the Hospital of St. Joseph, the preamble of which ran as follows: "It is a long time since this house was begun. However, as it has been neglected for a long time, no one knows exactly when it was begun. It was in 1679 that through the interest of the Venerable Father Claude de la Colombière . . . the leading men of the city, whose names are Jean-Éléonor Bouillet, Curé of Paray, and M. Benoît Palamède Baudinot, lord of Selorre, king's counsel in the parliament of Bourgogne, being met in the home of M. Bouillet, the advocate, judge of the said Paray, on the first day of May, established a foundation for the support of the sick poor."

"On the advice" and "through the interest" of Father La Colombière. . . . How are we to understand these words? Doubtless, we should be wrong in overestimating the part of La Colombière in this matter. In an undated letter, which could as well be of 1681 as of 1678—he declares that he does not know "how anyone can live in this hospital; or whether the girls there serve the men; who is in charge; whether they work without interruption, or only in turns." And because of this ignorance he does not wish to give his correspondent, who thought she had a vocation as hospital-aide, any advice either one way or the other. But if Claude had no share in the details of this reorganization, why should we not admit on the strength of tradi-

tion that he helped them with his advice and interest? The question of gathering funds for the hospital was in the air from the beginning of 1679, and we think that the leading men of Paray, some of whom were old sodalists of the father, profited by his temporary presence to ask his help, which his prestige as confessor of the faith made very valuable. If he were asked in this way, how can we doubt that he—recalling the poverty of the old hospital, “haunt of beggars, tramps, and gypsies who sometimes made revelry and disorder there,” remembering also the efforts made by Father Papon to apply a remedy to this distress—would not only have eagerly approved the plan, but would have encouraged the good will and awakened the generosity of donors?

After these ten days of good work the sick man left Paray, and by short stages, one of which was Roanne, reached Lyons on March 11th.

 30

The Sacrifice of Inactivity, *Spring-Summer, 1679*

A LETTER of March 23rd fully informs us as to the thoughts which occupied the heart of La Colombière on his return to Lyons. His apostolic ambitions were all the greater the more they were thwarted by his illness. But above all else, he aimed at a blind surrender to God's will.

I am here since the eleventh of this month, and find myself worse than I have been since leaving England. I have coughed a little blood, and I am on the verge of slipping back into my former condition. I believe that a light bloodletting has saved me from this relapse, and for the last two days

I seem to be a little better. Since coming here I have been eating meat, on the doctor's orders, even on Friday and Saturday. Soon I will be able to take some ass's milk, from which I expect some relief. God's will be done. Everywhere I see so great a harvest that I have all the trouble in the world holding myself back. But I have been ordered to keep silence, and I am determined to do so, as you advise. If Providence calls me to the land of crosses, I am all ready to leave. But our Lord has been teaching me the last few days to make Him an even greater sacrifice, which is to be resolved to do nothing at all, if that is His will; to die the first day, and extinguish by death the great desires I have of working for the sanctification of souls, or to drag on in silence the dull life of an invalid, a useless burden to any house that keeps me.

The mists of Lyons, apparently, were not good for the sick man, and his elder brother suggested that he be brought to breathe his native air and there wait for the fine weather. He himself described for Mother de Saumaise the life he led for a few weeks at Saint-Symphorien-d'Ozon.

I am writing you from the country, where I have been taking some treatments which have been prescribed. As you see, I am with my relatives. For me, it is cause for humiliation. Instead of edifying them by my talk and my way of living, the doctors have ordered me to keep silence, or to talk only to distract myself. Isn't this really a humiliating kind of life? I know that a genuinely spiritual soul could make a kind of purgatory out of it, quite suitable to purify the soul. . . .

The sick man was not yet, however, completely immobilized. A few miles to the northeast of Saint-Symphorien, in an estate of Corbas, where Claude doubtless had relatives, a tradition is preserved of one or other Masses which he celebrated there.

The Father went on to add: "The person whom you mention has had the thought of being a religious for a long time now, and is thinking of carrying out her plan any day." Some have thought that these words refer to Marie-Marguerite de Lyonne, but the supposition has hardly any probability. Even though she had for several years given up the vanities of the world while still living in the world, she was far from aspiring to the religious life. She even experienced so strange a revulsion for the cloister, as we have seen, that when she submitted

to the direction of Father La Colombière, she laid down the express condition, "that he would never ask her to serve God in this way."

Her aversion was so strong, the annals of the Visitation relate, that one day, having received a letter from her holy director which began with the words, "You must die to yourself, my dear child"; and when she read the words, "You must die," thinking that he meant the religious life, she all but fainted.

There was a torrent of tears and she was inconsolable. She did not, however, want to tell her secret to anyone, not even to her mother . . . when one of her young friends [doubtless Catherine de Bisefranc] having come at two in the afternoon and found the house in^o affliction and still fasting, she wanted to know the reason. Mlle. de Lyonne showed her the letter. Her friend, having read the letter, calmed her fears and showed her from what followed in the letter that her director was not speaking of religion. Joy was restored to her and all her family.

It was during La Colombière's stay at Saint-Symphorien that this vocation entered a new phase. Witnessing its development will allow us to appreciate the flexibility, the patience, and the deep humility which Claude showed in his direction of souls.

While passing through Paray, he had confirmed Mlle. de Lyonne in the pious and charitable life which she was leading in the world. What was his surprise, then, when about Easter he received "at the same time" from his penitent, "a letter and a note" saying that "they wished to place her" in "a new condition." He answered immediately:

I do not know what can have happened since I saw you, but I think we then decided that you were to remain where you were, at least for a time. . . . You have reasons for not thinking of the religious life. . . . Your health is not good. . . . You have not the interior drawing to leave the world; you are satisfied with the kind of life you are leading; you find in it the means of practicing all the Christian virtues; your occupations do not withdraw you from the union you desire with God; you feel disposed to obey your mother; you can do good to your friends by word and example, and you feel inclined to do this good. Until you tell me something else, I can only say that you ought to remain where you are.

This letter had just been sent when Claude received another from Sister Alacoque, which threw some light on the mystery. It was she

who had suggested a change in her life to Mlle. de Lyonne. Our Lord made me understand "very clearly," she wrote, that He wanted her as His spouse, and that "she become a religious." But prudent as usual, and not recognizing in herself any grace of office for guiding persons of the world, she had not gone farther with the party concerned than a suggestion, and then hastened to warn their common director. Nothing could better show the confidence that La Colombière had in the divine communications of Margaret Mary than his promptness to change his judgment in such circumstances. Considering his fatigued condition, could he not have been lacking in clearness of vision and firmness, perhaps through a fear of displeasing? At once he sent Mlle. de Lyonne a new message: "You will be surprised, I'm sure, Mademoiselle, to receive this letter. . . ." The fact was that even though she had not written him recently, he changed his former directions completely:

Today I feel obliged to write you for reasons which seem to me to be very good that I have changed my mind. I am of the opinion that you should make ready as soon as you can to make God the sacrifice which you have only begun, the consummation of which our Lord is asking of you. . . . Fight generously, Mademoiselle; a bright crown awaits you which is worth all that you will suffer to win it. It is a matter of giving your divine Spouse the last, or rather the first proof of your love: for to tell the truth, we have not yet shown that we love Jesus Christ for good and all, until we have given Him all that we can give. I rejoice with you for the mercy He has shown you by calling you to His service and the desire He has of possessing you whole and entire.

This letter was a terrible shock for the recipient. "She all but died as a result of it," say the annals of the Visitation. Taking advantage of the circumstance that one of her cousins, Françoise de Reclesne de la Vénérie d'Anthon, was married and living at Saint-Symphorien,

she left that same day with one of her brothers, and came like a person beside herself to receive the final sentence from her holy director. . . . She threw herself on her knees, assuring him that she came to make a sacrifice of all that he would bid her. With a look that was all heavenly, he said to her: 'If Jesus Christ asked you to be His spouse, would you refuse Him, my daughter?' She could only answer, 'O, dear Father!' 'Would

you deny Him this honor? Would you refuse Jesus Christ? It is God's will.' On the instant, all her troubles vanished, and she seemed to be in paradise. . . . During her return journey to Paray she was so transported with joy that she said to God: 'If hearing a person who loves you speak, O dear God, is something so ravishing, what will it be to hear You, to see You, to possess You for ever?' And thereupon saying farewell to everything she met, she cried, 'Farewell streamlets, farewell meadows, farewell country, farewell little birds.' She arrived at her mother's amid these transports, without having noticed the length of the way, which was about sixty miles.

Perhaps in this outburst of enthusiasm there was more poetry than strength. Madame de Lyonne never consented to her daughter's plans, and our "dear demoiselle," seized with a "mortal repugnance" for the religious life, "was not too vexed that her mother kept her in the world in spite of herself." And so the comedy went on. Father La Colombière was informed, and faithful to his principles of gentleness, relying on the interior work of grace, contented himself with answering:

You see very clearly, Mademoiselle, that God does not wish you to find any other support, since He has permitted you to be still more upset after your return, although you came in search of peace. You must, therefore, learn this lesson once for all, that God is the sole master of your heart, and that He alone can give you solid peace, and that in Him alone should be all your confidence.

But he gave no indication that he had in the least changed his new direction. Meanwhile Margaret Mary had let Mlle. de Lyonne know that she wished to talk with her. "She came all atremble, and not wishing to come near the grille, she asked at the gate what she wanted." "Simply," answered the Saint, "that you recite the *thirty days' prayer* for my intention." The excellent young woman "promised her, saying to herself: 'It is to make me a religious; but I will catch her, for my first intention in saying it will be never to have a religious vocation!'" She had hardly finished her thirty days when Margaret Mary had from our Lord a still more formal confirmation of His will. At the same time Mlle. de Lyonne received the answer from Saint-Symphorien which we have just now read. Far from sur-

rendering—"like a real lionness," says a contemporary—she stood her ground, only to draw on herself the following retort:

I am surprised, Mademoiselle, that you were so taken aback with my letter. It seems that having asked God for thirty days the grace to know His will, without my knowing anything about it, and my letter being delivered to you the very next day, that this would have some appearance of your having been heard, and that our Lord was letting you know in that way what you wanted to know from Him. . . .

I forgive your tears and your tenderness for your mother, but that does not prevent me from finding in this very circumstance a strong reason for your separating. For, if you belonged to our Lord as fully as you desired, your heart would not suffer so much at the bare thought of leaving her.

The director said that he was sure that Madame de Lyonne "would not oppose God's plans." But he was mistaken. This most loving mother—"a lioness" herself, too, when it came to defending her daughter—complained to La Colombière: "Why doesn't she wait until I die to enter religion, especially since her health is so poor and the cloister has so little attraction for her?"

A few weeks earlier the father had written to Mlle. de Lyonne: "On this important occasion you may expect from me all the help you can hope for. . . ." He thought it was never more necessary to keep his word. His answer is so delicate and so firm, it gives such a perfect idea of his infinite respect for souls, that it should be quoted at length.

Madame:

May our Lord be all your love and your sole consolation.

. . . I take the liberty of writing you this letter, to beg you in the name of Jesus Christ to forgive me for all the vexation I have thoughtlessly caused you. I cannot disguise my thoughts to a person who has some confidence in me, without betraying my conscience and making myself guilty before God of an offense which I do not wish to add to my other infidelities. But as I have no other interest, nor other design than to procure the glory of our Lord, if you do not follow my advice, I assure you that I will not be in the least put out, and that I will not find it hard to believe that I was wrong. . . .

Just think for a moment, please, that all the reasons that keep you from consenting to allow so good a daughter to go, would not perhaps have

seemed nearly so strong, if it were a matter of her being happily married a hundred leagues away. You could not go and live with her, nor see her oftener than once a year; remember that after your death your daughter will have less health than she has now, and that it will be much harder for her to grow accustomed to the religious life. Besides that, you will then no longer make any sacrifice in consecrating her to God our Lord, and she will lose the principal part of her merit, which consists in being separated from you.

You find it strange for her to embrace a state for which she has not much inclination. But it seems to me that we never have too much inclination for the cross. I know that when I became a religious I had a dreadful aversion for the life I am now leading, and I have never seen anyone who did not take this step with strange repugnances, except those children whom God takes from the world before they know what they are doing, because they would not have sufficient strength to surmount the difficulties if they saw them.

. . . If our Lord inspires you with the thought of consenting to the withdrawal of your beloved daughter, you will perform an action which perhaps will be worth more to you than all the good you have ever done. Perhaps it would not require more to wipe out all the sins of your life.

. . . Remember that you will never have so favorable an occasion for winning God's heart, and that you are letting a treasure fall from your hands which you will never be able to recover. It seems to me that God is doing you quite an honor in asking your daughter of you. You would have given her to a man of birth, and you have the courage to refuse Him who has created you, and who is to judge you sooner, perhaps, than you think!

Farewell, Madame, I pray God to have you do in this matter what will be most pleasing to Him, whatever that may be. And I desire it for the love of your soul, which is infinitely dear to me and which I would like to be able to make as pleasing to our Lord as the soul of the greatest of the saints.

In spite of such urging, Madame de Lyonne did not yield. But her daughter was thirty-five years of age. On fresh word, and very eager urging from Margaret Mary, to whom our Lord had repeated: "I want that soul, I want her at any price," she finally entered the Visitation on the approach of the spring of 1680. She had to wait fourteen or fifteen months, until shortly after her profession, to see some weakening in the opposition of her mother. Her weak health did not pre-

vent her from living a perfectly happy and fervent life in the cloister and of attaining the age of eighty-two.

It was a heated but peaceful struggle for a vocation, and not the only battle in which La Colombière had to show his gifts as peace-maker during his enforced leisure. He also had to do so on other grounds, to defend the reputation of a Jesuit, like himself a native of Saint-Symphorien, in a matter of certain prejudices and strange misunderstandings. This conflict caused at the time something of a sensation in the religious circles of Dauphiny and was a subject for chroniclers from Grenoble and Chambéry to Versailles, and even as far as Rome. Claude must have heard some echoes of it as soon as he arrived in his homeland.

When Bishop Le Camus took possession of the see of Grenoble in 1671, he was very closely connected with the Solitaries of Port Royal, especially Arnauld and Pontchâteau (whom he called "my dear brother"), a fact which did not predispose him to have a particularly tender affection for the Jesuits. After some months of observing, he complained to Pontchâteau of being at the head of a diocese in which "all they know of religion is confraternities, indulgences, and sodalities. However, there are daily a thousand communions and as many confessions in the city." On the other hand "there are in this diocese whole villages in which they never communicate or hear Jesus Christ spoken of. . . . And it is here I find more dispositions to profit from the word of God, because they have never abused the sacraments."

For nine years the college of the Jesuits had as professor of philosophy Father Jean-Baptiste Saint-Just, who exercised a profound influence in the city. In 1678 Le Camus thought he should ask his superiors to remove this religious from Grenoble. He refused, however, to give any reasons for this request. The provincial, Father de Camaret, hesitated, thinking that he could not in all justice give the bishop satisfaction, and the bishop, after waiting eight months, withdrew faculties for preaching and hearing confessions from Father Saint-Just. This was the occasion of numerous grievances which, while they did not go beyond the limits of the diocese, did get beyond France, when some echoes of them reached the senate of Savoy at Chambéry, and from there in a roundabout way got to Turin. A

copious *Relation* of the whole affair appeared on June 13, 1679, with the prelate's approval. It was a pamphlet of eighty-two pages which had a very wide circulation.

This was the state of affairs when La Colombière, a little rested by his stay at Saint-Symphorien, returned to Lyons at the end of May, and found himself without anything to do. He was shown the *Relation*, and some one suggested—the provincial doubtless—"You have a facile pen, you are from Dauphiny, and you are acquainted with Father Saint-Just, your fellow-countryman; why not write an answer for us?" He set to work, and the result was a booklet of forty-four pages in quarto: *Answer to a book entitled Relation of all that has taken place regarding Father Saint-Just, S.J., Prefect of Studies of the College of Grenoble, whom Monsieur, the Bishop of Grenoble, has forbidden to preach and hear confessions in his diocese*. As this brochure is extremely rare, having had in all likelihood a very small printing, and as it has up to this time escaped the notice of all the biographers of Father La Colombière, we must give a brief account of it.

Although the *Relation* concerning Father Saint-Just had been written by order of the bishop of Grenoble, the *Réponse* stated in its first pages:

We ask those, nevertheless, who read this *Réponse* to reflect how unlikely it is that he should have invented these calumnies. His birth and his training would be enough to put him beyond the reach of every unworthy suspicion.

The responsibility of the prelate being thus placed beyond the limits of the dispute, the author continues:

But that should not stand in the way of our pointing out to him the errors in the *Relation* which he himself might have made by inadvertence, as we should presume; and those which, for some unknown reason, some one may have caused him to make. One also even feels obliged to remove the scandal which the happenings imputed to the Jesuits in this book might cause the public; and all the more so that it has been circulated throughout the kingdom. It has been sold in the fair at Beaucaire; it has even been said that it was given gratis to people who did not ask for it,

and that his Lordship of Grenoble has sent it to the Court and to all the prelates of France, with letters which invite them to give complete credit to all that is there reported. . . .

Then follows a protestation, uncommon enough at the beginning of a defense, but with which the messages of Paray-le-Monial inspired the author. "In this *Reply* we shall try to say nothing that would give offense to Christian charity, which we cannot injure without wounding the heart of Jesus Christ and renouncing every claim to virtue."

And yet, this very charity—not to mention justice—towards the accused demands that the facts be set in their proper light as they actually took place.

Preceding provincials not having judged it good to remove Father Saint-Just, who is "quite indispensable to the college," and no fresh fact having been brought against him, the actual provincial had no reason for making a change. In 1678 the bishop admitted to Father de Camaret that he had no formal complaint to make against this religious, but that "he believed him to be a good man." The provincial, however, would gladly have issued the recall, out of mere deference to the bishop, for he had "never been wanting in compliance and sympathetic agreement with his views." But this very consideration shown to the prelate was a daily source of trouble for Father de Camaret in Chambéry, Turin, and Rome. From the city of Chambéry alone the provincial had already removed four fathers, "out of too great regard for the wishes" of the bishop, which had also brought down upon him the lively complaints of the senate and the house and leading citizens.

In the future, wrote Father de Camaret, of all the Jesuits of the province, none of those who are conscious of possessing some talent will care to come to work in this diocese. Some have already asked to be excused, fearing that the success which the Lord might give to their labors would draw some calumny upon them, and that they would then be condemned without a hearing.

The provincial thought that the row had thus been settled. But what was his surprise when he received an answer dated March 7,

1679, which began with these words: "If I knew that the removal of Father Saint-Just from Grenoble, where he has been living for more than fifteen years, would have been an exile or a banishment, I would have been more careful in proposing it to you. But I thought that it would be for the peace of the diocese that you have him retire, for other reasons which have to do with young men. . . ."

"Father Provincial," wrote Father La Colombière, "shuddered on reading these words. And it is quite plain that they naturally bore a meaning that was dreadful." He therefore informed Father Saint-Just, to give him a chance "either to clear himself or to correct himself, which is the first purpose which every superior ought to have, who is truly charitable and without passion." But this conduct of Father de Camaret appeared to the bishop to be "perfidious, treasonable, and horrible."

And yet, how can a superior punish without first informing the accused of the charges brought against him? "The interdict for the reasons contained in Your Excellency's letter would call not only for his removal from Grenoble, but would even oblige our father general to dismiss him from the Society, supposing the father were guilty of what he is accused." If he is guilty, it will not be enough to forbid him to preach and hear confessions, but "we will not suffer him in a body in which would be unbearable the mere shadow of a vice which St. Paul says should not even be mentioned. Interdict would be too light a penalty."

Father Saint-Just's innocence was easily proved; the provincial so informed the bishop, who answered on April 17th: "I was surprised when I saw in your letter that you thought that Father Saint-Just has been accused before me of a shameful sin, for no one has ever said anything of the kind, and nothing that I have written you should make you suspect that. My reasons were altogether different." These reasons the bishop continued to keep to himself. And that made all defense impossible.

On this La Colombière remarked: "The Most Reverend Bishop will pardon the liberty I take to tell him that he ought to explain himself differently. Because, as little as one may understand French, one cannot but suspect some enormity from the words which he has writ-

ten, and all the more so, that we had reason to believe that his charity had rather softened the accusation than exaggerated it." Besides, since then "Father Saint-Just has appeared before the bishop of Grenoble, but none of his accusers has ventured to come forth. It is said that the boys have made jokes among themselves of what has taken place; the matter is therefore only too public." And further on: "This is the twelfth or thirteenth Jesuit whom the bishop of Grenoble has asked to have sent away. . . . Far from this meeting with approval, there have been complaints from all sides."

Some detractors in Grenoble, who unconsciously were under the influence of the *Petites lettres provinciales*, made their complaints more general and reproached the Jesuits for allowing the people of the world who came to them for confession and direction, to remain "in the disorder of their dancing, their theaters, their luxury, their worldliness, and their immodesty." La Colombière had a good chance to protest. The best answer to the imputations would have been to send him to Grenoble to repeat the sermons he had preached at Lyons and London during the licence of the carnival. At least, Father de Camaret could in all frankness write to Bishop Le Camus: "Either I am much mistaken, or this sort of people hardly ever come to us."

As to the complaint that "only the riffraff of the province is sent to the bishop of Grenoble," the statement is so far from the truth, the author says, "that, knowing what extreme care is taken in choosing men, every effort has been made thus far to bring to him those who by their learning and other talents were able to give him a greater service; and this to such an extent—so much malice is there in the world—that it is commonly said at Grenoble, that what displeases the bishop is that they give him men of too much talent; that the Jesuits will never know peace until they fill their college with retired pensioners; that to preach successfully or hear confessions, or to have any other quality which wins the esteem and confidence of people is enough to merit an interdict."

It would be surprising if anything written by La Colombière bore no trace of the confidence in God of which he was the tireless apostle.

It would be a great misfortune for the Jesuits to lose the good graces of so many upright men whose friendship thus far has been so honorable and so advantageous to them. But after all, they want all the world to know that their main confidence is in God alone, and that the greatest help they expect from His infinite mercy is an invincible patience in their trials and a sincere love for their enemies.

To bring the incident to a close, La Colombière invited his reader to consider at least the good intentions of those who found fault with his brethren. "These fathers try to persuade themselves that such intentions are good, and they wish with all their hearts that their calumniators would seriously believe that they are offering a sacrifice to the Lord, and that one can offend the Jesuits without offending God."

This would doubtless have put an end to the whole affair, if some malicious persons had not taken advantage of the bishop's interdict to defame Father Saint-Just by hawking about the disgraceful accusation. With the support of Father Maire, his rector, the prefect of studies thought it necessary, in order to save his reputation and the honor of the college, to enter an appeal before the parliament of Grenoble. It was a mistake which only added to the confusion. The father general thought that the complaint was aimed at the episcopal censure, and issued a very severe reprimand for the prefect and the rector. In conveying to Father Oliva "the prompt and full submission" of the two religious, Father de Camaret felt himself bound to add the detail that "if Father Saint-Just had recourse to a lay tribunal, it was not to appeal from the censure of the bishop of Grenoble, which is a spiritual penalty, but from the public calumny which has spread on the occasion of the censure. It was not from the bishop he was seeking justice, but from the spiteful men who attacked his reputation."

Be that as it may, the main point was gained. Peace was restored at the moment when passions seemed to be at their climax. On September 20th, to notify the episcopal promoter that he was giving up his work, Father Saint-Just had used a tone that was haughty and flip-pant, and at which the bishop felt deeply hurt. Then, on October

13th, the bishop in a fresh and vigorous letter of complaint to Father Oliva, not only against the Jesuits of Grenoble and Chambéry, but against Father de la Chaize, renewed his complaints and his accusations. Suddenly, on October 20th, the whole storm collapsed. This was the result doubtless of a number of influences, among which we should reserve a share for the serene and moderate *Réponse* of La Colombière, and more still perhaps to his prayers.

It was an act of humility on the part of Father Saint-Just that carried the day. While Bishop Le Camus was making his pastoral visit "in the priory and parish of Saint-Jeoire, in the deanery of Chambéry, the religious presented himself in company with his vice-rector, Father d'Augières, to offer "on his knees" his apologies to the bishop, "to beg his forgiveness and to ask to be restored to his good graces." In a long written report, on record in the office of the diocesan chancery, the prelate takes pleasure in describing the scene. After having received from the hands of Father Saint-Just this written apology,

signed by him and two witnesses, drawn up by Boussière, notary at Grenoble, . . . and after having read it, we embraced the said Father Saint-Just, and assured him that we were very glad to forget all that had taken place. . . . Then the vice-rector confirmed all that Father Saint-Just had said. This latter had begun for the third time to say that he recognized his fault, and that he should do penance for the rest of his life, and that he very humbly asked our pardon. We interrupted him and told him that he must speak no more of it, that all was forgotten, and that all we had to do was to ask God's forgiveness for the faults which even the best people in the world commit in such disputes. But, as a sign of complete reconciliation, they must come and dine in our refectory with all the clergy of this canton. So they did, and we seated them with us at the head of the twenty-two priests who made up the gathering. Shortly after dinner, the said fathers took leave of us, saying that they would make public the cordiality and the kindness with which we had received them.

Happy days in which the most bitter clashes can be brought to an end in cantonal love-feasts!

However, with the aim of preventing fresh "disputes," *pro bono pacis*, Father Saint-Just was removed from Grenoble and sent to

Lyons, to the College of the Trinity, where Father La Colombière was going to have him as a confrere for two years.

31

Last Effort to Serve, 1679-1681

THE feast of Corpus Christi, which in 1679 fell on the first of June, was approaching. Claude could not forget the octave, "privileged" for him, when four years earlier at Paray-le-Monial he had received so many favors. Still more, he recalled the message of reparation which Christ had commissioned him to spread through the mediation of Margaret Mary. Several letters of this period bore witness to this. He had not left the country, that is, Saint-Symphorien, when he wrote to Mother de Thélis, superior of the Visitation at Charolles:

I am writing you today merely to ask you to have your whole community make an extraordinary communion on the day following the octave of Corpus Christi, not for my intention, but to repair as far as you can all the irreverences which will be committed against Jesus when He is exposed on the altars during the entire octave throughout the Christian world. I assure you that this testimonial of your love which you will give Him will bring down great blessings on you all. This is a practice which I exhort you to keep up all through your life.

To Sister Marie, the English lady who on the 26th of the preceding March had gone over from the Ursulines to the Visitandines of Charolles, he made the same recommendation in almost the same terms, providing that "her Reverend Mother approved."

Hardly had he returned to Lyons about Pentecost, after a brief stop at the monastery of Condrieu, where the piety of the nuns "edified him extremely," where their "kindness and sincerity covered him with confusion,"—when he hastened to send his "very dear Sister" Elizabeth the same request: "This practice has been recom-

mended to me by a person of extraordinary piety, who assures me that all those who give our Lord this mark of their love will derive much benefit from it. Try to lead your friends gently to the same practice. I hope that a number of communities will begin to practice this devotion this year, and continue it always in the future."

To Mother de Saumaise, a sharer like himself in the secrets of Margaret Mary, he is content with an allusion to the desire of Jesus Christ: "I am sure that you will not forget it."

From these and other letters which followed in the course of the summer, we learn that there was a period of several months when Claude's health seemed to improve. Margaret Mary "ordered" him, on the part of our Lord, "to think no more about the past, to make no plans for the future, and for the present to take care of a sick man whom God had confided to his care." He must "without scruple do what he can to get well." "I do it blindly," he said. For this purpose he once more submits to the diet of "ass's milk," then very much in fashion, and agrees again to go "to the country for a month."

It was during this second stay at Saint-Symphorien, in August or September, that he met a niece of twelve years who was "already chosen by our Lord to be one of His faithful servants." Éléanore La Colombière, daughter of Humbert, was in fact, very young as she was, to enter Carmel.

On his return, he could write: "I have never felt so well, I think; at least, since my return to France." He gave Mother de Saumaise the same assurance, and then added:

But you haven't done anything if I am not restored to my former health. You must indeed pray still more to obtain for me the grace of living as you know I ought to live. I would have need of very special help so to act as not to have good reason for regretting being cured if I were restored to good health. However, if I knew that in the future there was to be in me even a single atom which lived for the world and not purely for God, I would a thousand times rather be dead. From this you can see what you have to do for me with God. For I would in part have to lay the blame on you if my restoration to health turned out to be detrimental to me.

Having thus recovered some strength, La Colombière was thought capable of doing some light work at the College of the Trinity. He was given "the care of fifteen or sixteen young religious," who having

finished their novitiate were in the next two years to complete their studies in philosophy. Under the title *præfectus juniorum*, which the catalogue gives him. Claude held this office for two scholastic years, 1679-1681.

Among the young men who may have enkindled the flame of their devotion to the Sacred Heart on contact with him, we read the names of Joseph du Ranquet, Jean-Baptiste de Foresta, Louis-Felix de Ruolz, Paul-Antoine de la Rouyère, Jean-François de Dortan, who became provincial, Antoine de Colonia, Antoine de Grimaldi, and Paul de Raousset, who was rector of the College of Aix during the plague of 1722. But the most celebrated is Joseph de Galliffet, future provincial of Lyons and assistant of France, whose gentle tenacity and knowledge of theology were to succeed one day in triumphing over so many obstacles in favor of the Sacred Heart. Half a century later de Galliffet recalled with gratitude all that he owed to his master: "In the year 1680, as I left the novitiate, I had the good fortune to come under the spiritual guidance of the Reverend Father Claude La Colombière, the director whom God had given to Mother Marguerite, who at the time was still living. It was from this servant of God that I received the first instructions regarding the devotion to the Sacred Heart. From that time I began to have an esteem for it and a liking for it." Speaking elsewhere of the vow made by his spiritual father "to observe inviolably all the rules which St. Ignatius left his Society," he declared that "in the matter of holiness, he knew nothing more heroic than the faithful living up to such an obligation." He noted especially the admiration aroused in those who witnessed it, by La Colombière's exactness and constancy in keeping it. "We who had the good fortune to live with him and under his direction the last year of his life are able to give certain testimony of it."

We have something better than mere conjecture to know in turn the sentiments of the Father with regard to these "beloved sons," who were for him, as the Philipians were for St. Paul, "his joy and his crown." He wrote to a Jesuit of the novitiate at Avignon:

I am very much edified by the fervor and the piety of the young men whom you have sent us. I would like to be able to preserve what you have inspired them with. But your prayers must do in the future what your instructions and example have already done when they were in the

novitiate. I could well wish that they would have some good effect on me. I have every confidence that they will.

But as the condition of his health and the orders of the doctors compelled him to lead a life which he calls lazy, he accuses himself of giving all a very bad example.

From the all too rare letters, which have come down to us, written by Claude to young religious, we can surmise with what insistence and what affection he urged them to perfection.

Take advantage of the rest which God is giving you, my dear father, and make use of it to become a saint. Perhaps if you lose this opportunity you will never have another like it, and you will lose for heaven many years of labor and fatigue. . . . You want me to speak frankly to you. If you wish to answer for the favors you receive, be on your guard against the first assaults of the passions, and especially of the love of pleasure and of honor. The love of pleasure includes friendships. Unless I am mistaken, you are very susceptible on that point. It is not in your power to control these passions, once you have opened the door to them. At first, they will engross you, they become your sole occupation, and cause you to neglect everything else, with the result that when they begin to abate, you find yourself so forlorn, so to say, so far removed from God, so sidetracked, that not knowing how to get back on the road, in your despair you are in danger of striking out across the fields, and of going whithersoever nature leads you. That is why you must oppose the first movements and anticipate them, if possible by a long retreat. Dear God! my poor friend, God has given you a heart which seems to be made to love Him. Could it be at all possible that it was for someone other than Himself that He made it? I ask pardon for the liberty I take. Ask our Lord to convert me.

Holiness cannot be separated from the duties of one's state in life. To one of his "dear sons" who had left him some months previously, he writes:

Your letter has been a very good proof of the application they tell me you have for study. I am glad of that, because this application is by itself very pleasing to God who asks it of us, and because it is a good means to preserve that warmth of your devotion. . . . Continue, my dear child, to make yourself a holy religious. Every day I ask our Lord to give you this grace. . . . The more I learn the more certain I become that it is a great

misfortune to amuse ourselves with everything that can give us pleasure here below, when we could employ our time and our minds in sanctifying ourselves by the practice of humility and complete detachment from ourselves. Ask God, please, that I first do what I see and what I tell others to do.

And yet, hearts are not to be forced. However pressing may be the exhortations of the director, greater still is his discretion. The Holy Spirit is the first guide of the soul. The principal care of the director, especially where religious are concerned, is to make them attentive to the interior movements they receive. A young religious on the point of beginning his theological studies received this advice from Claude:

I do not know what obligations you are speaking of when you mention such a feeling of gratitude towards me. But you embarrass me still more when you ask me for advice on how you should act. Quite seriously, I would rather take it from you. If I had to begin my theology, I do not know a man better fitted to give it. Besides, you haven't the least need of instruction to regulate the life you are about to begin. You like solitude, you love study, and you attach yourself naturally to what is more important and more solid. The inclination you have to good, and the supernatural taste which gives you a leaning to it will not allow you to permit those occasions to escape which you will have for strengthening that inclination still more. A person with such dispositions can easily dispense with the advice that a man with even as little light as I have would give him. . . . I foresee that in these four years you are going to become a great doctor and a great saint; for I know that you have a great desire to do so, and I don't see anything that can stand in the way of your satisfying yourself on these two points. . . . Hitherto the only thing that has been able to hurt you is the extreme ardor with which your imagination, your mind, and even your heart attach themselves to the objects which interest you. Time, experience, and especially your reflections and your virtue have reduced this ardor to the limits which reason marks out for you. Consequently, I don't see anything that could thwart the great plans which you conceive today.

There remains to us a precious testimony of the kindly attentions with which La Colombière surrounded his spiritual sons. Having to direct them during the eight-day retreat which they make between the school years, he "drew up," as Father de la Pesse says, "a kind of

preparatory instruction." Meditating on it we better understand both the respect he had for souls consecrated to God, and the efforts and desires he judged necessary if they were to reap the fullest measure of profit from these days of grace:

1. The Spiritual Exercises should be made only at certain times, when the soul, drawn by God to solitude by a distaste for the things of the world and some extraordinary lights and movements which lead it to reform or sanctify itself, seeks means for satisfying this attraction; or, when touched by the sight of its own disorders, it conceives a desire for true repentance.

2. We should then enter into retreat to give ourselves leisure to examine what goes on within us, what this grace which we feel demands of us, and how we can satisfy the demand.

3. It is a very good disposition for entering into solitude to have a plan for a change in one's life and a desire to sanctify oneself. But for those who have not such a purpose, I think they ought to undertake the Exercises to get a serious view of the condition of their soul, to see impartially whether they are in the way of salvation; whether they are not, living as they do, running the risk of losing eternity. . . .

4. They should devote themselves to this exclusively, and admit nothing else whatever. It is only just to give to God and our soul all the attention demanded by the most important thing we have to do in life.

5. Complete solitude.

6. Purity of heart and perfect exactness in observing all the rules and additions. It is only for eight days. A slight fault could place an obstacle to the lights from heaven and repel God.

7. A great indifference regarding consolations. Not to expect them; to be ready for all kinds of weariness, dryness, and desolations. These are our due, and in the event that God wishes to send them to us, these will be eight days for the exercise of patience and penance.

8. If one has not the determination to become holy through these Exercises, he should at least be in the disposition to receive the graces which God will be pleased to send, and not resist the good inspirations which the Holy Spirit through His infinite mercy may give. Dear God, I don't feel the slightest desire of this lofty perfection; perhaps I am even too far removed from it, but if by an effect of Your divine kindness You would wish to change me, give me more courage, take me away from the world in spite of myself. I hope that I will allow You to act. You know the means that must be employed to overcome me; these means are in Your hands, for You are

Master. The perfect life frightens me. You can cure me of this false fear and make agreeable everything that seems repulsive to me. But only You can do that.

9. Great confidence in God. He has sought me when I ran away from Him, in the midst of the world and my occupations. He will never give me up when I go looking for Him in the retreat, or at least when I stop running away from Him.

10. Great humility in manifesting myself to the director. You should not say something else, if all you have to say is that you feel nothing, see nothing, or are not inclined to anything good. Keep to the points that are given and the prescribed reading, even when you think that something else would be better. This simplicity is of great merit, and draws down great blessings.

11. On the day preceding the Exercises, arouse in yourself the desire for solitude: "Quis dabit mihi pennas?" that is, the desire of perfection. "Blessed are they who hunger and thirst after justice, for they shall be filled."

Exclusive attention to the one thing necessary, scrupulous fidelity, indifference even for spiritual consolation, and over and above all, a complete surrender to God to accomplish His work in us. Such notations help us to see into La Colombière's soul. He suggests nothing to others which he has not first practiced himself.

How much we should like at this moment, when he is drawing near his end, to see still more directly and more deeply into his interior! But the sick write little, whether it be because of lack of strength, or because they find it repugnant to make their miseries a matter of confidence. Many no doubt were the correspondents of La Colombière who were living, like the Mlles. de Bise franc, "in great affliction for not having more news of him." And we cannot find fault with the retort merited by the indiscretion of one of them: "You haven't too much reason, Mademoiselle, to complain of the shortness of my letters at a time when I can hardly read yours." Even Margaret Mary who in this year of 1680 saw herself, because of a feeling of her unworthiness, assailed with doubts about her revelations, although "she did herself the honor of writing him," did not have an answer for a long time. But, "no matter how he deals with her she is always satisfied." Fortunately for us, about the end of the summer, and then

again in winter, she received two letters which allowed her to read quite plainly what was in the heart of her director.

First, there is this admission: "I have been deprived until today of the consolation I would have had in writing you, because I thought that God wished this little sacrifice from me." Claude experienced this complex incertitude, so common in the sick, and so painful to a heart which wishes to belong entirely to God.

Various desires arise in my soul of undertaking a number of things to expiate my sins and glorify my lovable Master. But in my present state of health, I fear they are illusions, and that our Lord does not judge me worthy of doing anything for His love. I do not think that anything would be difficult, if only I knew what He asks of me. Meanwhile, I am working only at recovering my health, as I have been told. But under this pretext I have reason for thinking that I am guilty of a great deal of cowardice. I am growing old, and I am infinitely removed from the perfection of my state. . . . I plainly see that if God does not have pity on me I shall die very imperfect.

But, in spite of all, gratitude predominates:

Thank God, please, for the condition in which He has placed me. Sickness was something absolutely necessary for me. Without it, I do not know what should have become of me. I believe that it is one of the greatest mercies God has shown me.

And yet, "Mass," he declares, "is about the only spiritual exercise I perform, and even that I do quite ill."

In this letter La Colombière had already reassured Margaret Mary against an impression of "insensibility" and of "hardness of heart," owing, she thought, to her "infidelity." But, as the spirit of lies redoubles his blows, the director, a few months later, also redoubles his assurances:

Our good Master has permitted him to attack you by the clumsiest of tricks, so that I could discover him, quite ignorant as I am. I rejoice and I praise God with all my heart that everything is falling back upon the imposter and that you have been purified by all the efforts he makes to detach you from your All. Once again, no, you are not in the least deceived. There is no illusion in the favors you receive from our Lord's mercy. I

have no reason for suspecting you of dissimulation or hypocrisy. And although there is reason for astonishment that the sovereign Master abases Himself to creatures so worthless and so imperfect, it would be blasphemy to think that His goodness could not go that far, and that it could be surpassed by our infidelities.

As the Saint did not cease putting forward her infidelities as an objection, Claude, without denying her unworthiness for such favors, takes up once again his teaching on confidence, to adapt it to this special case.

All that you say cannot shake my confidence in your condition. On the contrary, it persuades me still more of God's mercies in your behalf, because it is worthy of His infinite goodness to communicate Himself lavishly to souls, where only this very lavishness draws Him and the pleasure He has in doing good. I am so sure of what I tell you, that if it were necessary, I think I could answer you, on the salvation of my soul, that you must proceed with confidence, and think only of being thankful for the way God acts towards you. I have never flattered you. I feel myself as far from doing so now as ever, all the more so that I have never looked upon the goodness that Jesus Christ shows you as blessings that are your own or of you, but as the effects of His unlimited charity, which is pleased with sinners, which makes His grace abound where sin has abounded more, which fills the least costly vessels, to the end that no creature can boast in His presence, or attribute that which He places in the soul to the soul who receives it.

While reassuring the Saint, did not Claude have need of some one to reassure him? In the interval between these two letters, probably in October, 1680, he suffered a relapse.

They even thought that I was to die this autumn. At the moment, I am better, I think, than I have been ever since I was taken sick. As for the inner man, I am sure that you do not appreciate my condition as much as you say you do—if you could see it you would have great pity on me. I feel desires great enough to glorify our good Master, but I do not know how to carry them out. I have reason to fear that all of these desires are very mixed, and that it might well be the desire to get away from the obscure and humble life that I am leading at present rather than genuine zeal. For if in reality I did well at the little work I have, perhaps I would do more good than in more laborious and spectacular occupations. I would very

much like to get back again into the common life, and above all, to an ordered kind of prayer . . . because I am feeling better than I have for a long time. On the other hand, as I have already had a number of relapses, I am afraid that I am not yet sufficiently recovered and that there may be some illusion in my wish to resume the common exercises. What I find good in my present condition is a great humiliation, both outwardly and inwardly. I understand that this is an inestimable treasure. But pray hard to our Savior that He will make me love Him for His love.

The Life of Margaret Mary by her *Contemporaries* points out as addressed to Father La Colombière a letter in which she says regarding the devotion to the Sacred Heart: "My Father, I entreat you, don't overlook any occasion to inspire everybody with it. Jesus Christ has made me understand in a way that leaves no room for doubt that it is by means of the fathers of the Society of Jesus that He wishes to establish this devotion everywhere."

No exercise, she adds, is better adapted for raising a soul to holiness in a short time. . . . No other means would be needed to bring back their first fervor even to the least well regulated communities, and to carry to the summit of perfection those who are living in the most exact regularity. My divine Savior has given me to understand that they who work for the salvation of souls will have the art of touching the most hardened hearts, and will work with a marvelous success, if they themselves are penetrated with a tender devotion to the divine heart. People in the world will find by this means all the helps necessary to their state; that is, peace in their family, solace in their labors, and the blessing of heaven on all their enterprises. It is properly in this adorable heart that they will find a place of refuge during their lifetime, but principally at the hour of death.

Father Croiset who was the first to publish this letter in 1691 does not indicate the name of its recipient. Nor does Father de Galliffet. In fact, as a consequence of the exact manner in which the Saint here expresses herself, with regard to the Society of Jesus, we could believe that these words belong to the lights with which she was favored on this point in 1686 and 1689. The recipient would then be Father Rolin or Father Croiset. It is not impossible, however, that during the lifetime even of La Colombière, Margaret Mary had a glimpse of the part which Jesus wished to entrust to the Society in

the development of the devotion to his divine heart. We cannot with certainty deny the attribution given to this letter by the *Contemporaries*.

In spite of the gleams of hope by which consumptives are encouraged from time to time, the year 1680 dragged out almost completely in bewilderment. Mlle. de Lyonne had rather suddenly, in the beginning of March, entered the cloister, and now that she was preparing for her clothing, the father wrote her: "I cannot go to see you, no matter how much I desire to." In April the same answer is given to Catherine de Bisefranc:

You speak to me of going to Paray. I don't see any hope of it this spring, nor even for the coming summer. . . . We must get accustomed to doing without everything, except God. Having been so close to death, it is a good deal that He leaves me still the liberty of exchanging a few letters with you, for the mutual encouragement we give each other to love Him until death. I would not wish that you came to see me, neither you nor anyone else.

Finally, when Mother de Thélis, superior at Charolles, invited him towards the end of spring to receive the profession of Sister Marie, the English Visitandine who had made a term of probation with the Ursulines, he answered: "I must make a sacrifice to God of the desire I have to go to see you. . . . Although my health seems to have improved, I haven't enough to venture on this journey, or to endure the fatigue which will necessarily follow."

A few weeks passed. Concerning the strength which he thought was returning Claude had to write: "I began to make so ill a use of it that I forced God to permit me to relapse after Easter into the same mishap which brought me more than once before so close to death." The "coughing of blood lasted three days."

And yet, so strong is his hope, that a few weeks later he corrects himself to say: "I am much better, and almost as good as I ever was." And to Mother de Saumaise: "The great mishap which was thought to be fatal will be just the thing, it seems, to make me well again, if not entirely, at least enough to enable me to serve our Lord again." Then, resuming the thought he had been busy with, he confided to his correspondent:

It's wonderful to see how many temporal and spiritual advantages have come to me through this sickness. I shall never be able sufficiently to praise the infinite wisdom and goodness of God who brings His wonderful plans to success by the very ways which men think will destroy them. I have never had so much joy, I have never found God so good to me as in the time when I was in the greatest danger of dying. I would not exchange this danger for all that is worth desiring in the world.

Since October 1680, Father Gilbert Athiaud, formerly Claude's father instructor in the tertianship, was rector of the College of the Trinity. The school year over, he thought, together with the provincial, that the climate between the Rhone and the Saône was obviously not suited for the relief of a consumptive. Moreover, in spite of the current ignorance of theories concerning bacilli, superiors knew that a sick man subject to blood-spitting might be a source of contagion for his young penitents.

The little college of Paray-le-Monial having neither boarding students nor Jesuit scholastics, the danger of contagion there was less. Besides, every one knew that La Colombière would be received there with joy, cared for with the most attentive charity, and that his presence could be profitable there in a good many ways.

In August Claude started out for the city of the Sacred Heart. It was there that God wished the sacrifice of his life.

32

Last Sufferings, 1681-1682

MEDITATING during his tertianship on the calling of the apostle which demands a thousand fatigues, La Colombière had written: "I feel quite ready, thanks be to God. I am not afraid of any work; I would gladly die in such labor." And again:

I realize that an apostle is not called to an easy life, nor to repose. He must sweat and wear himself out, fear neither heat nor cold, nor fasts, nor

watchings. He must use all his strength in this work. The worst that could happen to him would be to die in the service of God and his neighbor. I don't see why that should frighten anyone. Health and life are at least indifferent to me. But sickness or death, when they come as the result of having worked for the salvation of souls, will be very pleasant and precious.

These were not empty words, and the moment had come to prove it.

On another day, we recall, frightened by the dangers which a passion for vainglory places in the path of the apostle, he had cried: "Dear God, I wish to become holy, between You and me." But as "it is a kind of miracle to see a man who loses nothing of his humility, nothing of his holiness in zealous activity," he added, in the conviction that God alone can work this miracle: "Make me holy, dear God, and do not spare me in making me good; for I wish to become so, no matter what the cost."

God had, in fact, undertaken to work this miracle. To detach this "faithful servant" from the esteem and applause of the world, He had sent him away from France into a sort of exile, to a country the language of which he did not know. He had permitted calumny, accusations before the highest court of England, imprisonment in a foul dungeon in the midst of common criminals. To this God had recently added sickness, a long exhausting sickness, which brought on a loneliness and impressed the sufferer with a sense of his uselessness. And now, before the gaze of this man of forty-one, death seems to appear on the very near horizon. . . .

"Dear God, I wish to become holy, between You and me." If Claude had not desired this sickness he had at least clearly foreseen it, and fully accepted it. When he arrived at Paray-le-Monial in August, 1681, La Colombière was in such a state of weakness that "he had to be dressed and undressed, for he could not take care of himself." In September and October, "my strength and the fine weather permit me to take a few walks, from which I get some relief. But the dampness and the rain have set me back where I was before." After that "a heavy cough and a constant difficulty in breathing are causing me a good deal of discomfort; but from time to time that gets slightly worse and then slightly better. I do not go out and I find talking difficult, although I have a good appetite and all the appearances of

health in other respects. I have not been able to try out this air to see whether it is good for me, as I can breathe only that of the fireplace and of my room." For the rest, he says that he "could not be better." "The members of the community and seculars have been very eager to furnish me with everything to tempt my appetite, which is quite too much. We shall have to see what God will send with the spring."

Among the inner circle who were assiduous in their attentions to Claude, the first place belongs to the religious of his little community. First, the superior, Simon Bourguignet, who was related to Baudinot de Selorre, easily shared the esteem and affection of that family for the saintly invalid. Then there were three other priests, Antoine du Port, prefect of studies and missionary; Claude Vuillard, teacher of humanities; and the grammar teacher, Philibert Le Fèvre, who also filled the office of preacher.

Among the seculars whose kindly attentions the sick man praises, we must not fail to mention Catherine de Bisefranc. If, on other occasions, she seemed to us a bit indiscreet, she showed herself, here and even up to the father's death, happy in making herself useful and bestowing a tireless devotion on him. This kindness impelled La Colombière to temper with a smile the remonstrance he sometimes thought necessary. Thinking that he noticed in her too sensible an affection for one of her godchildren, "Be careful," he had written her, "not to make your little niece vain by dressing her in such a worldly fashion; on the contrary, teach her early to despise what you well know cannot be reconciled with true piety." One day at Paray the aunt, on a visit to the parlor, brought along the young Susan, then eight years of age, more decked out than usual, her hair showing traces of curl papers and the curling iron. Claude, taking a good look at the excessively frizzled ringlets, contented himself with the remark: "This little head will one day wear an entirely different head-dress." Susan took this word as a prediction of her vocation. She was in fact to enter the Visitation and live there half a century.

As soon as La Colombière had sufficient strength, he went to the cloister to visit her whose vocation had cost him so much trouble, Sister Marie-Rosalie de Lyonne. "What a happiness it is," he said at

once, "to see you a spouse of Jesus Christ!" To which she answered, "O my Father, how good it is!" "Both of them," says the annalist of the convent, "remained so enraptured at the marvelous effects of grace, that they were for some time unable to express themselves except by silence." Of the words which the holy man spoke to her then, the sister a long time later recalled especially this: "All your life keep in God's presence like a little child before its father. You will find rest only in His love."

As to the conversation which Claude had with Margaret Mary about the feast of All Saints, he has said only this: "Our Lord told her that if I were well, I would glorify Him by my zeal, but as I am ill, He glorifies Himself in me." It is just what the Saint wrote a year earlier to Mother de Saumaise:

Once having recommended Father La Colombière to our Lord, our Lord told me: "The servant is not greater than the master, and that there was nothing so profitable as conformity with His dear Master; and that although in the eyes of man, good health would have been more for God's glory, suffering gave Him incomparably more. For there is a time for everything. There is a time to suffer and there is a time to work. There is one for sowing and one for watering and cultivating." That is what He is doing at present, for our Lord takes pleasure in giving an inestimable value to his sufferings, by the union which he has with His own. . . .

Would it be indiscreet to think that to the pains of his illness another had just been added, a secret pain, but quite mortifying? From his sickroom, Claude beheld the house and the garden which he had bought with so much care when he was superior and wanted to enlarge the college. Now both had been sold by his successor, Father Polla, in 1680, on the excuse that the property was a burden. All that had been kept was a piece at the end, large enough for a chapel. It was only natural that La Colombière should regret seeing his plans for expansion thus given up. Sick men are sensitive, and the saints are not sheltered from human emotions. He could also have suspected that this "retrocession" which twenty-four years later was to become the object of "letters of rescision" had not been quite properly done. But if this was a cause of suffering to him he very carefully avoided giving any sign of it.

During the octave of St. Francis Xavier—the time during which six years earlier he had received so many lights—Claude was still able to ascend the altar. But Margaret Mary “having recommended that he be very careful about his health, advising against his saying Mass, he was satisfied for a while with receiving communion daily. Our Saint had often repeated with a sad little smile, “that she was on the point of giving up praying to God for her director, seeing that the more she prayed the worse he got.” Towards the end of December, however, one of his friends, doubtless Catherine de Bisefranc, came to tell the invalid that Sister Alacoque “had such strong hopes of obtaining his cure from God, that she spoke of it to her as a thing which she no longer doubted.” “God could very well,” concluded the father in reporting this message, “give me back my health to punish me for the bad use I made of sickness.”

If Margaret Mary’s words are here accurately reported, we must admit that this time the Saint was mistaken. There is a time to live and a time to die. The “faithful servant and perfect friend” of Jesus will not spend another Christmas on earth.

However, a letter from Margaret Mary to Mother de Saumaise, dating from the first days of 1682 is far from giving this impression of confidence. She saw the father once more, and delivered the message which had been given her for him by her former superior. Then these words: “He is always rather ill; when he is a little better he will write you. I have seen him twice, and he finds it very hard to speak. Perhaps God is doing this to have more pleasure and more leisure to speak to his heart.”

As far as he was concerned the sick man had no illusions. He is “quite convinced” that he will not get well at Paray-le-Monial. The difficulty he finds in breathing “has always made him say that nothing would give him relief but air that was very bracing and penetrating.” “Whether that of Lyons is what I need,” he wrote in his last letter to Mother de Saumaise, “I have some doubt. That of Vienne, I think, is much better.” Just recently Dr. Guillaume Billet, “who has given careful study to the disease,” stated his opinion. He said “that it is not enough to be two or three months in a high altitude, but that long years must be spent there to give nature the leisure to recuperate.”

He had even written on the subject to his brother, Father Antoine Billet, then *socius* to the provincial of Lyons. This was an anticipation of the therapy of modern sanatoriums. The superior of the residence at Paray, on the contrary, Father Bourguignet, who had a great affection for the saintly invalid and had "shown him extraordinary kindness, would have found his leaving very hard." In the depth of winter it did not seem reasonable. Would it even be possible? How could they find a convenient conveyance and favorable weather?

Claude, doubtless, left everything in the hands of his superiors. Should these superiors be informed once again? His rule obliged him to. "When anyone finds that anything is harmful to him, or that something else is necessary concerning his lodging, his office, or his work, let him give notice to the superior." La Colombière had taken a vow to observe all his rules. In the present case, what was the extent of his obligation? Should he write to the provincial? Perhaps. But he did not yet see "that this was necessary." Perplexities, scruples. . . . If one is surprised at these hesitations, he must never have been near a sick man. Thus, since he had occasion to write to Mother de Saumaise, whose judgment he knew to be reliable, Claude humbly asks for her advice. "Do me the favor of telling me what you think about it, and advise me before God, so that I may unburden my conscience and not die with the scruple of having failed in my rule."

The obituary of Mother de Saumaise at Dijon includes a few lines from Father La Colombière, taken perhaps from this letter. They contain his final teaching on illness and are very searching:

One thing I have learned since becoming sick is that we are bound to ourselves by ties that are small and imperceptible, and that if God does not take a hand in it, we will never break them. We don't even know them. It belongs to Him alone to make us holy; and it is not a slight thing to desire sincerely that God do all that must be done for that; for by ourselves we have enough neither of light nor of strength.

This confidence is the reflection of an attitude of soul taken on five or six years earlier, the very attitude which was expressed in the *Act of Oblation*, constantly renewed ever since: "Sacred Heart of Jesus, teach me perfect forgetfulness of myself, since that is the only way by which we can enter into You."

The terms of this prayer reappeared in a letter to Margaret Mary, and indicate a kind of disappointment: "I am not able to acquire that forgetfulness of self which should give me entrance into the heart of Jesus Christ." Today, a few weeks before his death, it is the same story.

Have we here the odd example of the unheard prayer of a saint? We might think so, if we did not know the constant dealing of God in the guidance of hearts. Through all the stages of the spiritual life, the goal seems to retreat as we advance. God's demands are made progressively stricter. The lights which He gives the soul about Himself, and her own self, reveal depths at first unsuspected. Sickness enabled Claude to detect "imperceptible attachments which he never knew of."

Sincere and steadfast in his desire for "perfect self-forgetfulness," he was continually detecting and continually realizing fresh progress. But the Holy Spirit had him achieve this progress—and this is another law of God's action—without the consolation of being aware of it.

Here below the effort for sanctity is an effort that is never finished, and its results are of such a nature that, kept apart to be the joy of God and the admiration of a few witnesses, the saint has not the least enjoyment of them.

What is essential for the total accomplishment of God's plans—to which He sets what limits He pleases—essential also to the inner peace of the saint is that the soul be completely and to the last iota submissive to God's will. That this was true in the instance of Father Claude the texts quoted above are superabundant proof.

The religious did not have to have recourse to his provincial, as the letter from Dr. Billet sufficed. As soon as he was informed, Floris La Colombière, Claude's younger brother, who then held the office of archdeacon of the primatial Church of Vienne, set out for Paray-le-Monial with an easy and comfortable carriage in which he proposed to remove the sufferer.

There were no preparations, no farewells to make, and the departure was to take place at once, Thursday, feast of St. Francis de Sales. Notified of these plans, Margaret Mary sent word to the father telling

him not to leave, if he could do so without disregarding the orders he had received. Astonished, Claude wrote and asked the Saint's reason in writing for this request. When he received her answer, also in writing, he resolved to defer his journey, with the full approval of Father Bourguignet.

What took place during the ensuing ten days remains obscure. Did his brother renew his urging to depart? Did he receive more detailed instructions from the provincial of Lyons? The fact remains that towards the 9th of February, Claude felt that he should make a final effort. A local tradition, preserved until the last century, claims even that "he started, got as far as the hill of Survaux, but was not able to make it, and had to return to the college." He had a violent attack of fever, and on February 15th, the first Sunday of Lent, at seven in the evening, he died, carried off by a torrent of blood.

At five o'clock the next morning Catherine de Bisefranc came to tell Margaret Mary of the death of their common director. The Saint merely told her: "Pray and have prayers said for the repose of his soul." But about ten o'clock the same day, she wrote her: "Don't grieve any more. Pray to him. Fear nothing; he is more powerful to help you now than ever." Margaret Mary sent her friend to the college to get back the answer she had sent to the last note of Father La Colombière, the answer which on January 29th, deferred the departure. Father Bourguignet refused to surrender it, but was willing, as an explanation of his refusal, to let Mademoiselle de Bisefranc read it. It contained these simple words: "He told me that He wished the sacrifice of your life in this country." "Rather than deprive myself of this note," the superior declared, "I would give you all the archives of the house."

Eight years later, when Mother Greyfié was asked for her recollections of Margaret Mary, she answered from Semur-en-Auxois, where she was superior:

When the Reverend Father de la Colombière died, this dear sister lost in him the best friend she had in the world. But she wasn't disturbed or upset, because she loved her friends for the glory of God and for their own advancement in His divine love, and not for any interest of her own. But I took notice that she did not ask me permission to do for him as she did for

others in the way of extraordinary prayers and penances, and I asked her why. She answered me with a sweet and satisfied air: 'My dear Mother, he has no need of them. He is in a condition to pray God for us, being placed in heaven by the goodness and mercy of the Sacred Heart of our Lord Jesus Christ. Only, to satisfy for some negligence which remained to him in the exercise of divine love, his soul was kept from seeing God from the time it left his body to the time the body was laid in the grave.' I never heard her regret her loss. . . .

If the recollections of Catherine de Bisefranc and Mother Greyfié are accurate to the last details, it follows, if we compare them, that Claude was buried the day after he died, at ten in the morning. Such haste would go to show that they did not in any way wish to give solemnity to his funeral. Moreover, there was no procession. He was buried in the little chapel of the college, where he had been consecrated to the Sacred Heart, where also he had so often offered, with the holy sacrifice of the Mass, the sacrifice of his life in reparation for the sins of the world.

Even in his death La Colombière was, as he had desired to be, the "man whom no one thought of any more." As though to give some satisfaction to this thirst for a hidden life, in the archives of the Society of Jesus in which are kept the histories of all the houses of the Order—histories which have to be sent to Rome every three years—we read from the pen of the chronicler of Paray-le-Monial in 1682: "In the last three years there has been nothing here worthy of record, or which ought to be written down in our annals."

Is it possible that he whom Christ has called His "faithful servant and perfect friend," has just died in this residence of Paray, and the historian of the house, in his official account which was intended for his superior general, declares that he has nothing to say of him! After all is the annalist so much to blame? What did he know of the exceptional gifts heaped up by God in this chosen soul? Except for a few superiors, who would have suspected anything of the kind? His fellow-Jesuits looked upon him, of course, as a man of very high talent, and as an excellent religious, but one who, as far as externals went, did not surpass in any marked manner this, that, or the other. Especially for the past few years was he considered a poor invalid

for whom work could nowhere be found, and who, in spite of the charity with which he was surrounded, felt himself to be a burden. It was known that this man had intervened in a convent in which there was a nun about whom opinion was divided, that he had compromised himself by supporting her, and in the eyes of a number of people had lost his reputation for wisdom and prudence. Did not Margaret Mary write: "He had much to suffer because of me, for they said that I wanted to deceive him with my illusions."¹ And this poor invalid had just died, breathing out his soul in one last hemorrhage. Indeed, there was nothing there to interest the house historian. . . . "A man about whom nobody thought any more, who is nothing more in the world, a nobody." Is it not touching to learn that Father La Colombière, in his immediate circle, was just that right to the end?

But when his death permitted those who knew him more intimately to make known their secrets, especially when his *Spiritual Journal* was discovered, the fervent though discreet veneration which surrounded him in life spread very quickly. Then was verified what Father de la Pesse declared of the holy religious in his *Preface to the Sermons*:² "The lofty idea which had been formed of his virtue blazed out . . . in singular expressions of veneration. The civil magistrate asked for his remains, to erect a monument to him in the parish church. But the superior of the residence did not think it right to deprive our church of this precious treasure. People eagerly gave him the honors which they reserve for holiness, and today his tomb is a kind of depository for the prayers and piety of the faithful of the vicinity."

¹ *Autob. R.*, Ct. II, 93.

² *Préface*, p. xxii.

Survival

COMMISSIONED by Christ to assist His messenger, Margaret Mary, in promoting the devotion to His Sacred Heart, Claude La Colombière had been sent to a country which was turning to heresy and where this propaganda was practically impossible. Was this some contradiction in God's plans? He returned to France a consumptive, incapable of any intensive work, and died at the age of forty-one. Where, then, is the wisdom of God's thought?

On the day following Calvary the runaways of Emmaus had also spoken of failure. Later, at Rome, the disciples of Peter and Paul could do so, too, when the lifeless bodies of the two apostles were brought back to the catacombs.

Once again the words of the prophet were going to be verified: "I will confound the wisdom of the wise. . . ." "My thoughts are not your thoughts" (Isa. 29:14; 55:18), and especially Christ's promise: "If the grain of wheat does not die, it remains alone; but if it dies, it brings forth much fruit" (John 12:24).

We already know the efforts made by La Colombière while still alive to make the Sacred Heart known. After his death he pursued his mission still more successfully. What religious ever enjoyed the benefit of so rapid a publication of his works? Less than a year after his death they had all been collected and revised, even the *Prolusiones oratoriae* (February 14, 1683). The "privilege of the king" to publish is dated April 15th, the *Imprimatur*, May 15th. In March of the following year, Anisson, a Lyons publisher, finished the printing of six volumes, the first of which was entitled *Retraite spirituelle du Père Claude La Colombière*. In the dedication of the *Retraite* to Madame the Duchess d'Aumont, he said: "I am giving to the public four volumes of *Sermons* and the fifth of *Réflexions chrétiennes* from the same hand. I have chosen to print his *Retraite spirituelle* first, so

as first to make known the character of the sublime virtue of the author." Further, the *Preface*, due doubtless as was that of the *Sermons*, to Father de la Pesse, ran: "There is no doubt that the reader will be charmed with the sincerity of his soul, and that he will admire at once its purity and its elevation. We wish that he would also learn from this work what answer should be given to God, when He has the goodness to speak to us through His grace, and to ask for our services."

Contrary to the expectation of men, God willed that this work should teach its readers a good many other things as well. To the notes of the tertianship retreat, the editors had added those of the retreat in London, which contained the account of the apparition of June, 1675, followed by the oblation to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. To obviate the "embarrassment which one might feel" in reading this second retreat, they placed at the head of it the Memorandum in three articles, which was given to Claude when he left Paray-le-Monial. But did they know by whom this "paper" as they called it, had been given? Could they have named the person of "integrity and virtue" who was its author? Did they take any account of the place which devotion to the heart of Jesus held in the soul of La Colombière? So little did they suspect the importance of this second retreat—which in fact in the number of its pages is five times smaller than the first—that in the title to the volume, they make no account of it, and call attention simply to "A Spiritual Retreat," that namely of the tertianship. In the divine intention, however, of making known to the world the revelations of Paray-le-Monial, it was the second which counted. Had the editors suspected that, they would certainly have shown less daring in their publication.

But, thanks be to God, it was in print. The devout world received it enthusiastically, but did not seem to have been more struck by it than were the editors by the retreat of 1677. The devotion of the religious to the heart of Jesus, the "overtures" made by God to this "person who, as we have reason to believe, is according to His heart," did not hold its attention. It admired La Colombière's fidelity to the suggestions of grace, his generosity, especially his vow, "capable," according to Father de la Pesse, "of frightening the most spiritual,"

and such as is "never made, at least among the Jesuits, to bind a religious to a more eminent perfection."¹ The mere spectacle of this supernatural realism is interesting; but of all the rest—visions, revelations concerning an unknown person, who is not even named—no notice at all is taken. Even at the Visitation of Paray-le-Monial minds were not alert on the subject. When in 1685 the *Spiritual Retreat* was read in the refectory, the assistant, whose task it was to see beforehand the matter that was publicly read, had gone over it so rapidly that she had not noticed the last pages. What was there to be afraid of? In a writing of the venerated Father La Colombière was not everything equally good for souls?

The book drew to its end. In bringing his London retreat to a close the author had just noted how "his heart expanded" in making these acts of faith, especially with regard to the Eucharist. "On such occasions my heart expands and feels those sweetnesses which I can only relish and receive from the mercy of my God without being able to explain them." His hearers thrilled in unison. "You are good, dear God, to communicate Yourself to the most ungrateful of Your creatures and the most unworthy of Your servants; be You praised and blessed forever." Without reserve Margaret Mary and her companions associated themselves with the same praise.

But the reading stopped short, and in an impressive silence, without any transition, these words went echoing through the refectory: "I realize that God wishes me to serve Him in promoting the fulfillment of His desires regarding the devotion which He has suggested to a person to whom He communicates Himself very confidentially, and in whose behalf He has wished to make use of my weakness." Margaret Mary was on pins and needles. 'Being in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament,' said this saintly soul, 'one day in its octave. . . .'" Then followed the whole account with which we are familiar. The superior, the Very Honored Mother Melin, surely would have liked to stop the reader and hurry the meal to an end. But this would be to call attention to the incident. Why not seize the occasion, before the whole community, to give Sister Alacoque, even at the cost of some confusion, the esteem which some so obstinately

¹ *Préface to Sermons*, VII.

denied her? And so, for the first time was announced publicly the message of mercy which was to go on resounding to the ends of the world: "Behold the heart which has loved men so much that it has spared nothing even to exhaustion and consummation to bear witness to its love."

The rule forbids that anyone in the refectory look about to see what is going on. A novice, however, Sister Claude-Rosalie de Farges, could not restrain her eyes. She caught sight of her dear mistress as she "lowered her eyes and remained in a deep act of self-annihilation." *Enfant terrible* that she was, at the beginning of recreation, she drew close to her and ventured to remark: "Dear Sister, you certainly came into your own in the reading today, and the Reverend Father La Colombière couldn't have better pointed you out." To which the Saint was content to answer that "she had good reason to love her lowliness."

From that day, if all the obstacles in the convent did not disappear, at least many of the prejudices and irritabilities began to die out. The recognized holiness of Father La Colombière laid a kind of aureola on the brow of the lowly Margaret Mary, which gave authority and credit to her mission.

The same results were evident in other places. From Semur, where she was superior, Mother Greyfié wrote, January 30, 1686, that Father La Colombière's *Retreat* "has given a start here to this lovable devotion" of the heart of Jesus, and that "her whole community is affectionately drawn to it."

From then on Margaret Mary took shelter behind this *Retreat* to make known the desires of her sovereign Master. On March 20th of the same year, all aglow, she informs Mother de Saumaise at Dijon of what took place at Semur. On July 4th she wrote with a marvelous simplicity to Mother de Soudeilles, who just then had been chosen superior at Moulins: "We have found this devotion in the book of the *Retreat* of the Reverend Father La Colombière, whom we venerate as a saint. I do not know whether you are acquainted with it, or whether you have the book I refer to. It would be a great pleasure to me to let you have it." As Mother de Soudeilles gladly accepted her offer, the Saint in sending her the book, again attested "the good ef-

fects" produced by this devotion "in the souls who had the happiness of learning it by means of this holy man." Shortly afterward, Margaret Mary is no longer speaking of cloisters, but makes her assertion more general: "I must give you some news," she writes to Mother Greyfié, "regarding the devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus Christ. It is spreading everywhere by means of the *Retreat* of the Reverend Father La Colombière."

In this same year, 1686, however, a storm broke as a result of the dismissal of Mlle. de Vichy-Champrond, whom the Saint, fulfilling her duty as mistress of novices, had to send away. Once again some treated her as a visionary, and she who saw so clearly where others were concerned, was herself assailed with scruples. Is she not the victim of an illusion? Is she not in danger of compromising the reputation of her director, Father Ignace Rolin? The latter is content to answer her: "Let those complain who will. Don't fear anything on my account. The saintly Father La Colombière is my authority."

Finally, half a century later, Father de Galliffet, who was well posted on the beginnings of a devotion that was very dear to him, confirmed all these testimonies, when he declared of the *Journal of Retreats*: "It was the first means which our Lord used to make public both the revelation, and the devotion to the Sacred Heart."

But our Lord did not stop at that. In order to make Margaret Mary understand, and us through her, the role given to His "faithful servant and perfect friend" in the development of the devotion, He favored the Saint with a wonderful vision. It was the evening of the feast of the Visitation, 1688. On this patronal feast of her Congregation, Margaret Mary, as she wrote to Mother de Saumaise, had "spent the whole day before the Blessed Sacrament," receiving from the loving heart of Jesus "special graces which she could not describe." Then there was represented to her a very lofty place, spacious and of wonderful beauty, in the midst of which on a throne of flames was the lovable heart of Jesus." On one side stood the Blessed Virgin, on the other, St. Francis de Sales with the holy Father de la Colombière." All about were numerous daughters of the Visitation, accompanied by their good angels. Turning first to these, the Blessed Virgin, "showing them the divine heart," assured them that she

wished "to make them depositaries of this precious treasure," not only for their own personal advantage, but to enrich the whole world with it, without any fear of its failing, because the more they took from it, the more they would find in it." Then turning to good Father de la Colombière, this Mother of Goodness said to him: "For you, faithful servant of my divine Son, you have a great share in this precious treasure. For, if it is given to the Daughters of the Visitation to give and distribute it to others, it is reserved for the fathers of your Society to make known its advantage and its value, so that men may profit from it."

This vision remained deeply engraved in the mind of Margaret Mary. The further she went, the more evidence she got that Blessed Claude from heaven on high, carried on a mysterious apostolate of prayer and intercession. When Mother de Saumaise met with some difficulties in her propaganda, she came to her support with these words: "It ought to be a great consolation to you to have so close a union with the good Father de la Colombière, for he does in heaven by his intercession all that is accomplished here below for the glory of this Sacred Heart. Bear bravely, then, all these little contradictions. . . ." She sends the same assurance a few months later to Father Croiset: "You must turn to His faithful friend, the good Father de la Colombière, to whom God has given great power, and to whom He has entrusted, so to say, all that concerns this devotion. I confess to you in confidence that I have received great help from him, as he is even more favorable now than when he was here below. For unless I am mistaken, this devotion to the Sacred Heart has made him very powerful in heaven, and has given him a higher place in glory than he would have from all that he would have been able to do through the whole course of his life."

Margaret Mary was so convinced of the authority of her director that she chose him as her special protector and invoked him with the greatest filial confidence. Holy obedience having permitted her to keep a picture of him on parchment, she wrote a prayer on the back of it, which reads: "O, blessed Father Claude de la Colombière, I take you for my intercessor before the Sacred Heart of Jesus Christ. Obtain for me from His goodness the grace not to resist the designs

He has upon my soul, and to make me a more perfect imitator of the virtues of His divine heart. . . . Obtain for me, great saint, I beg of you, the grace to die the mystical death, so that the natural death may come the sooner."

At the sight of this earthly survival of La Colombière, one recalls in spite of oneself the word of Christ to His apostles, who were saddened at His going: "It is good for you that I go" [John 16:7]. Would the humble Jesuit, had he lived, enjoyed such influence? Outside of a small number of convents, he would have met with nothing but resistance. Before the impregnable front set up by the mockeries of freethinkers and the skepticism of the philosophers, the calumnies of the Jansenists, the sluggishness of mediocre Catholics, the prejudices even of the good with regard to novelties, the force of his word would have become powerless. Today in the face of the whole world, the *Retraite spirituelle* has opened the way.

The fact of the matter is that adversaries rose up, as they did against St. Paul, "on the right hand and on the left," and sometimes their opposition came from a legitimate prudence. There were so many false devotions swarming, that Rome found itself obliged at this time "to condemn in many works the errors of an indiscreet devotion to St. Anne, the cult of Mary in the Eucharist, the aberrations of mistaken clients of St. Joseph, the slaves of Jesus in the Eucharist, and of Mary Immaculate. Some writings concerning the holy religious Ursula Benincasa and Mary Magdalen de Pazzi had been put on the *Index*."

Why be surprised then if the devotion to the Sacred Heart underwent alternations of success and failure? In 1696 a little book, written perhaps by the young Father de Galliffet, *De cultu sacrosancti Cordis Dei Jesu*, was rejected at Rome by the censors of the Society of Jesus. Professor of rhetoric at Lyons, Father Croiset saw himself, at the desire of the general, Father Thyrso Gonzalez, put well out of the way from the center of the province for the space of some ten years, because he put too impetuous a zeal into his propaganda and "seemed inclined to singular opinions." In 1704 his book was put on the *Index*, without however, any condemnation of his teaching. After being superior of the residence in Marseilles, Father Croiset

returned to Lyons as rector of the College of the Trinity, and in order to satisfy the desire made known to him by Margaret Mary in 1689, continued to promote the interests of an association under the title of the Heart of Jesus. But this confraternity, which numbered among its members, and especially its directors, such Jesuits as de Galliffet, then provincial of Lyons, several consultors of the province, the prefect of the Sodality of Nobles of Marseilles, the rector and master of novices at Avignon, was denounced at Rome to the general as constituting a "kind of party, . . . the members of which sought only to sing their own praises and promote their own interests." Father Croiset was even shamelessly accused of recruiting members by offering them "plenty of chocolate and plenty of coffee."

Something no less strange was that many obituaries, or *ménologes*, devoted to Father La Colombière—we know of six—observe the most complete silence on the devotion to the Sacred Heart. Not only do they not speak of the revelations of Paray-le-Monial, but if they name the town, it is only to say that the father came there to die. All insist on the retreat of the tertianship, and on the vow of heroic fidelity which signalizes it; but there is not the slightest allusion to the London retreat, nor to the account of the apparition which it contains, nor to the act of oblation to the heart of Jesus with which it ends. They are on the whole splendid eulogies of the Saint, but they suppress by a stroke of the pen the crowning of his holiness and the very mission itself for which God had sent him into this world. "The irreligious sometimes imagine," says Father Bainvel with gentle malice, "that a devotion which makes use of a nun's visions and revelations is sure to find credence in this world of preachers, confessors, and theologians. Little do they know them." They who claim that the devotion to the Sacred Heart was invented by the Jesuits of the eighteenth century to recover the influence which was escaping them, will here find their condemnation.

But that does not prevent the *Journal de Trévoux* from doing him justice when reviewing in 1725 the *Lettres spirituelles*, which had only recently appeared. It said: "He has given a form to the cele-

bration of the solemnity of the heart of Jesus, which is so widespread today." The *Journal* even added—we know not on what authority: "He has drawn up its office, its practices, its conditions in a book which is being published."

If the book here mentioned never existed, the same cannot be said of some notes or documents concerning Blessed Claude, and which timidity might well have caused to disappear. At least two of these menologies herald the appearance of accounts, the purpose of which was to throw a clearer light on his labors and the heroism of his virtues. In 1683 one of them declares "that a good number of writings regarding him have already been sent to Rome." Another adds, by way of conclusion: "Many qualities more wonderful than those we have just read will be published when the time comes." Doubtless, Father de la Pesse had these words in mind when he said in his *Preface* of 1684: "Whoever writes of his activities will have no trouble in supporting his work with great happenings. . . . All that Father La Colombière has undertaken throughout his ministry will provide his historian with excellent material." But as yet none of that has been recovered. Could it be that the "light" was deliberately "placed under a bushel?"

Despite so many obstacles the *Retraite spirituelle*, continued its work of enlightenment, bringing before the eyes of all the requests for the special worship of His heart made by Christ. Furthermore, many menologies attested not only to the "eminent sanctity" of La Colombière, but also to the "pleasing collection of moral and natural qualities, his sound and penetrating mind." He was presented to the religious of the Society "as a perfect model of the virtues of their state;" moreover, "every one who came near him admired his lights and the spirit of God which animated him." Could the conclusion be avoided? Unless we are to suppose that the gifts of wisdom and prudence would have abandoned him precisely in a matter which he judged to have been of supreme importance for his spiritual life, it would have to be admitted that the devotion of which he proclaimed himself the defender was deserving the attention of Christians who were eager to please Christ.

Thus Father de Galliffet had good reason for holding out. When in 1723 he became, in spite of denunciations, the assistant at Rome

for the French provinces, he found in his files the accusing letter of 1718. Far from destroying it as unjust and calumnious, he saved it from destruction and turned it into the archives of his Order as a specimen of the relentless and petty opposition which had been aroused against his beloved devotion. It has ever since remained there carefully catalogued. Later he merely wrote: "The persecution was active. It went so far as to regard those who wished to celebrate or establish this feast [of the Heart of Jesus] as a kind of sect which might cause trouble in the Church." He was a first class theologian, and brought to a focus the labors he had pursued for a quarter of a century, and took advantage of the authority his office assured him to have accepted in 1726, at the very center of Catholicism, a book on the *Devotion to the Sacred Heart of our God and Lord Jesus Christ*. Written in Latin, this book made easily accessible a knowledge of the revelations of Paray-le-Monial throughout the whole Christian world. Seven years later the work translated into French appeared with a few additions at Lyons, under the title *L'Excellence de la Dévotion au Coeur adorable de Jésus-Christ*. To name Father de Galliffet is to name a spiritual son of Blessed Claude. It also signalizes his survival.

For us at this distance the remembrance of this "active persecution" is a great advantage. How much security do these battles afford us! Recalling these headstrong and obstinate adversaries, we cannot help bringing to mind the service rendered us by the incredulity of the Apostle Thomas, in making solid our faith in the resurrection of Christ. What a source of security are these long hesitations and meticulous examinations in favor of a devotion which today popes recommend with such insistence!

The day came, when, witnessing the spread of this devotion, the Church which had been long silent but attentively observant and sovereignly just, declared that La Colombière had "merited, together with the glorious name of herald and apostle of the heart of Jesus, a place of honor among the chosen few who have most labored to spread and establish this devotion." She affirmed that he had been its "champion and outstanding promoter"; and that "he deserves to be counted among the number of the most illustrious apostles of the devotion to the Sacred Heart."

The Church has done still more. As long as the prejudices against the worship of the heart of Jesus lasted, a mist of discredit had naturally enveloped its promoters. When it triumphed, and the Church had established the feast for the whole Christian people, by a reverse movement, the favor in which the devotion rejoiced was reflected on its apostles. At the expense of their strength, sometimes even of their reputation, they have brought about the success of a discredited cause, but one demanded by Christ. Is it not just that they be honored? And if, at this complete change of opinion, the sympathetic regard which encompasses them discovers heroic virtues in their lives, why should we be surprised if the Church proclaims them saints to all the world? This is what has happened for Margaret Mary and for John Eudes. It will soon come to pass, doubtless, for Claude La Colombière.

Meanwhile the Church has declared him Blessed. Following on the ordinary process, which took place at Autun between December 7, 1874, and March 4, 1876, Leo XIII on January 8, 1880, signed the decree which introduced the cause in the Roman tribunal. The process *non cultus* was approved by the pope on March 10, 1881; the apostolic process on his reputation for holiness and the virtues in general, on June 6, 1888; the process on the virtues in particular, as well as the examination and approbation of his writings, on January 28, 1897. The process on the heroicity of his virtues was begun, and ended in four sessions in the course of the following years up to July 9, 1901. Faced with the fulfillment of the vow made by La Colombière to observe all the rules of the Society of Jesus, and with the repeated assertions of Margaret Mary and the testimony of our Lord Himself, naming Claude His "faithful servant and perfect friend," the cardinals could not hesitate. On August 11th of the same year, Leo XIII published the decree on the *heroicity of his virtues*.

In it were repeated the words already uttered at the general congregation, words which were touching on the lips of an old man of ninety-one: "This cause is of a kind to fill us with unaccustomed joy. . . . It awakens in our soul the sweet memory of the time of our youth, when we took pleasure in reading the writings of this

venerable servant of God, when we found great delight in the holy communications which he had by letter or word of mouth with the Blessed Margaret Alacoque."

The pope went on, alluding to what he liked to call "the greatest act of his pontificate," the consecration of June 11, 1899: "Our joy is still increased at the thought of certain circumstances of the present time, this in particular, that we have wished at the beginning of this new century, to consecrate the whole human race, worn out by suffering, to the most merciful heart of Jesus Christ. And what could be more desirable for us in this than to raise one day to the honors of the Blessed him who was the outstanding promoter and defender of this most holy and most salutary devotion to Jesus?"

But in order to be able to realize such desire of beatification, the Church asks that God by the voice of miracle bear witness three distinct times to the Cause; four times even, if in the process of the virtues, the judges were unable to collect the suffrages of eyewitnesses. This was the case with La Colombière. Dispensation for the fourth miracle is not usually granted, except for founders of religious orders. Pius XI, however was willing, May 18, 1927, to give this dispensation for the greater reason "that this venerable servant of God was the defender and intrepid champion of the Sacred Heart of Jesus," and that the "Blessed Margaret Mary had borne by the living word and by writing a remarkable testimony to his virtues."

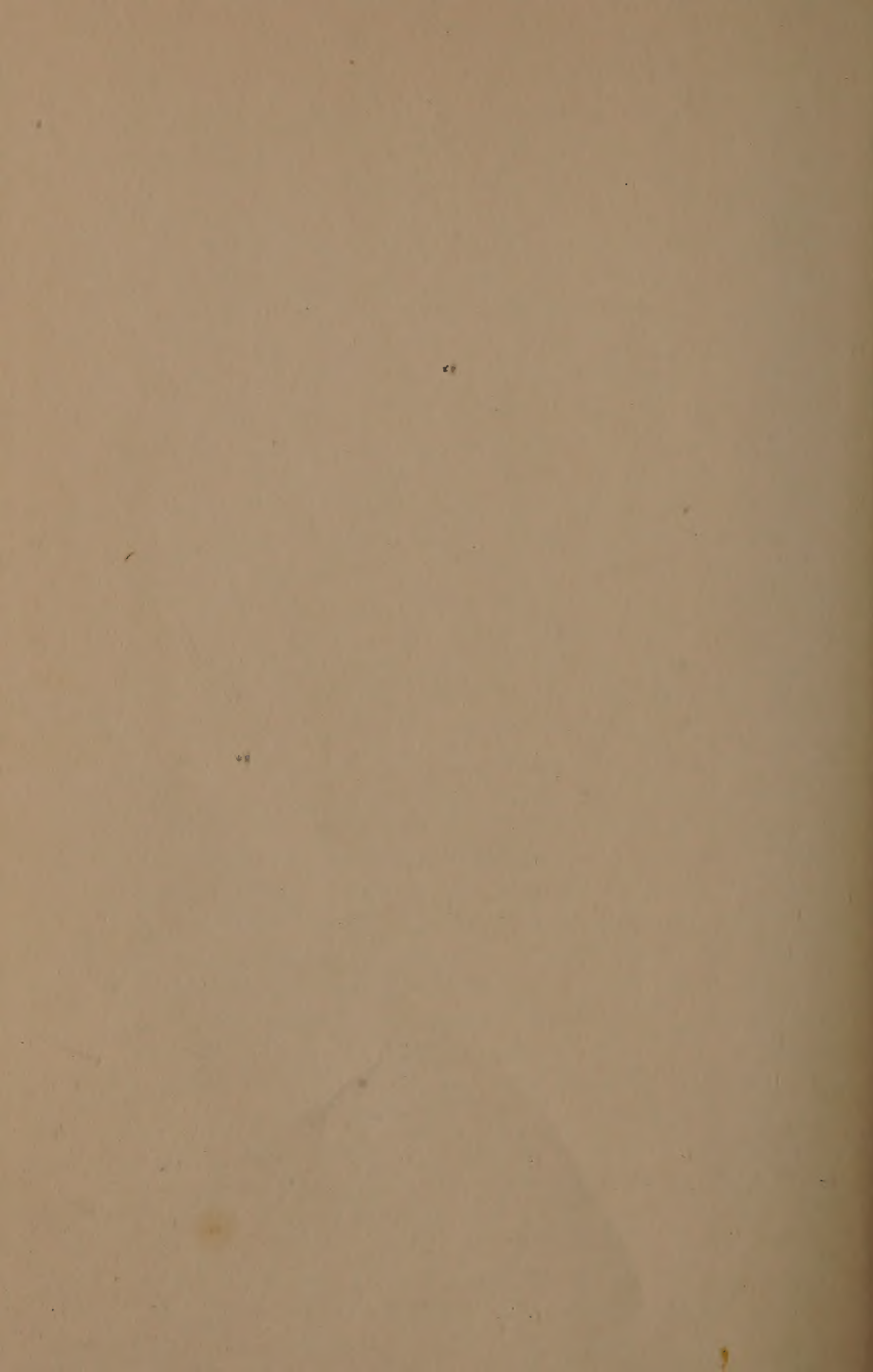
It was again on the word of the Saint, that the Promoter of the Faith, Msgr. Salotti, in the last document of the last process, May 21, 1929, consented to lay down his arms, that is, his "censor's pen." The preceding year he had multiplied his objections against the three miracles offered, and now today, after all the enquiries have been meticulously finished, it is his to declare "whether in all security the cause may be advanced," and to bring to an end a process which has lasted for fifty-five years. The last argument, which summarizes all the others, and to which he yields, is the "testimony which Margaret Mary," an unexceptionable judge in the matter, "had so often borne to the holiness of her spiritual director." "Therefore, without any hesitation," he concludes, I think that we may proceed to the solemn beatification of Claude de la Colombière, and I heartily

join my own very humble prayers to the desires of the whole family of Ignatius."

On June 7, 1929, feast of the Sacred Heart, in the presence of Pius XI, who had arrived a few minutes earlier from presiding at an event of historic and world-wide interest, the ratification of the Lateran Treaty, the decree "*de tuto*" was read, and on June 16th the solemnities of the beatification took place in St. Peter's.

In this glorious year Paray-le-Monial could not be forgotten. A chapel, the first stone of which was blessed on June 1st, soon rose in honor of the new blessed. In the interior, forming a retable above a side altar, between the choir and the nave, a gilded reliquary, Byzantine in spirit, contains his holy remains. Rising above it is a reclining figure, a masterpiece of religious and decorative sculpture, representing La Colombière "lying in a light of glory. All is of gilded copper, the figure elongated and clothed in priestly garments, the hands joined. The parallel folds of his great religious mantle, delineated with an artistry that is rather severe, wrap him in majesty." Above is this device, taken from the *Canticle of Canticles*, *UNA EST COLUMBA MEA*. The whole chapel with its octagonal lantern, surmounted by a cupola, resembles from the outside "an enormous pedestal, on which stands, slender, animated in its stylized and bold modernistic lines, the statue of Christ." According to the idea of the architect, Father Bossan, the whole "is really a sanctuary of the Sacred Heart, a glorification in light and art offered to Christ. His device, *MITIS ET HUMILIS*, is inscribed in letters of gold on the inner periphery of the cupola. The capitals, mosaics, the colored windows tell the story of His mercy. And the tabernacle, where He dwells in the reality of His flesh and blood is, in the entire plan, the center of the whole prospect and the center of light.

Could the teaching which is contained in the life of Father Claude La Colombière be more perfectly symbolized? Whether one is, as he was, a student or a teacher, in the limelight or hidden away in a house of retreat, missionary or prisoner, at the court of kings or on a bed of sickness, one has nothing else to do here below but to bear Christ and to reveal Him to the world.



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Perfect Friend. The Life of Claude
TITLE

La Colombière, S. J. (1641-1682).

DATE DUE

BORROWER'S NAME

STORAGE - COSA

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Kollin

De Filippi

Murcat

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